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2019

Abstract

An Exploration of the Criminal Thinking Processes in Criminal Offenders

by

Mark Lemieux

PhD, Walden University 2020

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

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Abstract

This study sought to learn about Criminal Thinking patterns of thought in former criminal offenders. The discovery of this information is important to several fields in the formulation of treatment programs toward the elimination of criminal behavior. This research is based on the theory formulated by Yochelson and Samenow, and expanded on by Walters, that holds that Criminal Thinking patterns develop along a continuum and can lead to criminal behavior in some. Specifically, this study sought to learn whether criminal offenders were aware of their Criminal Thinking patterns and if that awareness impacted their criminal behavior. This qualitative phenomenological study relied on semi-structured interviews of 6 former criminal offenders who had served a sentence in a Federal Correctional facility, and the thematic analysis of the transcripts of those interviews to draw conclusions. The results indicate that several themes emerged: (a) awareness of criminal behavior, (b) purposefulness in the commission of crimes (c) increase in frequency and complexity of criminal behavior (d) lack of concern for others (victims, family, friends); (e) awareness of inevitable detection and negative outcome, (f) realization of impact of criminal behavior and remorsefulness. The findings of this study conclude that criminals do have an awareness of their criminal thinking patterns before during and after the commission of criminal acts and that and that they are affected by that awareness in how they act. The results of this study may lead to positive social change in reducing or eliminating criminal behavior in former criminal offenders and others.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Crime and criminal behavior continue to be a major societal concern, as it has been for centuries. While rates of violent and non-violent crimes rise and fall over time, depending on economic, political, and other reasons, more must be done to curb crime and criminal behavior. There is no argument that crime and criminality take a great toll on individual victims of crime, and on society as a whole. As such, the government has taken great steps to curb crime, and protect its citizens from criminal offenders (Chan & Shapiro, 2007).

Within the past thirty years, there has been a shift in the philosophy in government regarding crime prevention and control, the enforcement of laws, and the treatment of criminal offenders (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). Over that time, state and Federal legislatures have established and instituted strict policing policies and dedicated hundreds of millions of dollars to the arrest, prosecution, and incarceration of offenders as a solution to the ‘crime’ problem (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). This shift in philosophy began in the mid-1970’s, as the relatively lax policing policies of previous decades were to be replaced with get-tough-on-crime methods. Much of the shift in policy began as a response by politicians like Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson, to the unrest associated with the civil rights movement; the elevation in the prevalence of violence; and the increase of drug use in the mid and late 1960’s (American Psychological Association, 2013a).

While those tasked with identifying and implementing effective measures to reduce crime searched for solutions, many touted ‘zero-tolerance’ policies for criminal acts, and mandatory sentences for offenders, as effective ways accomplish their goals (Collier, 2014). As a result of calls for tougher enforcement, state and federal legislatures and policy makers responded by

instituting stricter crime control methods and longer and more harsh sentences for criminal offenders over the next decades (Collier, 2014).

Law enforcement then began to ramp up its efforts in ridding the communities of crime and offenders and policy makers also shifted philosophy in regards to the treatment of ‘criminal offenders’, once convicted and facing incarceration (Collier, 2014). Where once the focus was on diversion from incarceration and on rehabilitation for those incarcerated, the shift resulted in punitive measures taking hold and treatment programs were reduced or eliminated (Collier, 2014). The combination of these stricter police practices and a less tolerant prosecutorial and judicial system signaled the beginning of a trend where larger numbers of offenders were arrested and incarcerated; where those incarcerated served longer sentences; those incarcerated received fewer treatment programs and less effective rehabilitative methods (Collier, 2014).

At the time, state and federal legislators, not wanting to appear weak on crime, advocated for arrest rather than diversion from the system; mandatory sentences that took options away from judges; longer sentences; and fewer programs for inmates (Collier, 2014). Parole was abolished for federal offences; the percentage of those receiving probation rather than incarceration dipped; and prison-based rehabilitation, treatment, vocational and educational programs dwindled (Collier, 2014). The result was a quadrupling of the inmate population throughout the country, and an increase in re-offending across almost all demographics (Collier, 2014).

There exists a wide range of individuals who are characterized as ‘criminal offenders’ and are incarcerated as a result of their criminal behavior. As such, a myriad of aberrant behavioral is classified as ‘criminal’ conduct, where an offender faces incarceration for their

misdeeds. Those who study crime and criminal behavior have developed many theories of crime, including who engages in criminal behavior, the reasons why and methods to combat it (Muraven, Pogarsky & Shmueli, 2006). Some theories suggest that many of those who commit crime have had a lack of socialization at home, where they were exposed to inadequate or poor parenting, harsh or erratic discipline and as a result, develop little self-esteem, a lack of personal responsibility and the failure to learn the concepts of right and wrong (Muraven, Pogarsky & Shmueli, 2006). Consequently, they turn to criminal activity as a way to support themselves and obtain what they want (Muraven, Pogarsky & Shmueli, 2006; Tittle, 2000). Other theories focus on lack of employment skills; poor education; poverty; culture; mental illness; or combinations of these factors to explain crime and criminality (American Law and Legal Information, 2015).

One theory, developed by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) has received a great deal of attention since its inception. The theory contends that Criminal Thinking Errors are at the heart of criminality (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). Although the theory has received much criticism, it remains viable in many interdisciplinary practices and research studies (Reid, 1998). That theory will serve as the basis for this proposed research study.

The Yochelson and Samenow (1976) theory attributes criminal behavior to a series of thought processes that evolve into what they describe as Criminal Thinking patterns inherent in criminals, but absent from non-criminals (Bartholomew, Morgan, Mitchell and Van Horn, 2017). These patterns, referred to as 'Criminal Thinking Errors' left unchecked, lead to the development of a Criminal Personality (Reid, 1998). Criminal thinking patterns become pervasive in the criminal and manifest themselves in the manner in which the criminal lives; the way they process, integrate and synthesize information; and the manner in which they experience the

world (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). According to their theory, these abnormal thought patterns can and do develop across all demographics.

The initial research by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) was followed by refinements in the theory by Walters (2003) and later adapted to form the basis for many comprehensive treatment programs for incarcerated offenders and others (Walters, 2003). Unfortunately, research suggests that the lack of availability for the majority of inmates in these prison-based programs has led to an incredible amount of re-offending upon release.

Society now deals with over six hundred thousand prisoners being released from prison every year, many with no vocational skills, poor education, mental health issues, and substance abuse problems (Garland, 2002). Often, they leave prison in worse physical, emotional and psychological condition (Garland, 2006). Consequently, many offenders released back into their communities return to crime, unable to find adequate employment, housing, transportation (Garland, 2002). Many continue to struggle with legal difficulties, as well as the simple everyday processes others take for granted. Many end up on welfare and disability, while many more return to prison (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). As it is incumbent for researchers across many disciplines to search for ways to reduce criminal behavior and seek to minimize the impact crime has on society, this study will examine a possible method for identifying criminal thought processes of offenders released from incarceration.

This research study explored the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders after assessing Criminal Thinking via PICTS, followed by interviews with study participants to investigate the thought processes.

In this study, concepts developed in NLP may be considered to identify patterns of thought in criminal offenders. Neuro-Linguistic Programing was first developed in the mid-

1970's, by psychology student Richard Bandler and linguist John Grinder, who sought to develop a modelling methodology that would explain human behavior, and then develop a system by which one could modify thought patterns and change negative behaviors (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). NLP theory holds that there is a connection between neurological processes (neuro), language (linguistic) and learned patterns of behavior (programming) (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985). These researchers believe that behavior is subjective, based on internal representations learned through real world experiences and is a response to the real world 'stimuli' (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). They believe patterns of behaviors are created based on the one's subjective representations (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985). NLP posits these behavioral patterns can be changed using the techniques developed in NLP (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). NLP methods can be used to eliminate negative patterns of behavior and replace them with positive ones by following their method(s) (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). Bandler and Grinder (1975) identified the positive behaviors of 'exceptional' people and believe that anyone can model their own behavior after the those by following the methods and techniques of NLP (Grinder and Bandler, 1975).

Neurolinguistic Programming methods include the establishment of a goal (desired state) to be accomplished and then working toward that goal by making interventions into problem behavior (present state) using certain NLP techniques (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). NLP strives to bring about a change in behavior by altering the internal representations and the elicited responses to encountered stimuli (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985). NLP methods can include Dissociation, Content Framing, Belief Changing and Future Pacing (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985).

Statement of Problem

The size of the prison population in the United States has been increasing at an unsustainable level for the past three decades (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). According to research, there are over 2.3 million prisoners in the U.S. in county jails, state and federal prisons, and juvenile correctional facilities (Wagner and Rabuy, 2017). Approximately 95% of these inmates will be released after completion of their sentences (Wagner and Rabuy, 2017). While some will return to their previous employment, many more will continue to commit criminal acts, and face further incarceration.

While research confirms that when offenders participate in prison-based programs, the likelihood of re-offending decreases substantially (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). It is suggested herein that there is a need for further research in the area of treatment programs for offenders incarcerated in our nation's prisons and jails. While programs in existence today may be effective, their limited availability presents a troubling issue. There is little doubt that when criminal offenders participate in well-designed and properly implemented prison-based treatment program, the result is increase in the offender's emotional investment their own mental health, and by extension their relationships with others, their prospects for employment and other positive opportunities upon release (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). The same can be said for criminal offenders who have been released (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). When directed toward understanding the nature of their criminal behavior and in ways to modify or correct it, the result is a reduction in misconduct while incarcerated, and in criminal offending upon release (Chan & Shapiro, 2007).

Purpose of Study

This research study explored the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders. The study will assess Criminal Thinking via PICTS, followed by an interview of study participants

thereafter. These elements will be integral in the investigation of the Criminal Thinking thought process.

Criminal Thinking Styles (Errors) are identified by Walters (2001) as: Mollification, Cutoff, Entitlement, Power Orientation, Sentimentality, Super Optimism, Cognitive indolence and Discontinuity (Waters, 2003). The PICTS measures the aforementioned Criminal Thinking Styles with two additional Styles measured (Walters, 2012). There are scores for each 'Style' as well as an overall score.

The PICTS, was developed by Walters (2001) and described as an "...80 item self-report measure, designed to assess crime supporting cognitive patterns" (Walters, 2002). The answers to the PICTS questions will be measured on the General Criminal Thinking scale (GCT) to determine Criminal Thinking in study participants. The PICTS measures Criminal Thinking Styles (Errors) on a 4-point Likert-type scale (*strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree*), with *strongly agree* responses receiving four points, *agree* responses three points, *uncertain* responses two points, and *disagree* responses one point, except for the Defensiveness-revised scale where point values are reversed (Walters, 2012).

Neurolinguistic Programing is characterized as the 'study of the structure of subjective experience' and uses various techniques and methods to explain thinking patterns and behavior (Kudliskis, 2013). Through a process that includes assessment of Criminal Thinking errors, a discussion using concepts developed in NLP, and an interview, the researcher will explore the thoughts of criminal offender study participants regarding Criminal Thinking and criminal behavior.

The original NLP theory was based on data collected from behaviors of individuals the originators deemed to be 'Exceptional People', as observed from the theoretical perspective that

their patterns of behavior could be analyzed using cybernetic techniques, and then and copied, to create a methodology for modelling (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). Included in the group whose characteristics Grinder and Bandler (1975) sought to have emulated by their NLP clients are: Eric Erikson, a world-renowned psychologist and psychoanalyst and Harvard Professor of psychology; Virginia Satir, a psychologist who was a pioneer in the field of family therapy and considered an innovator in the field of Organizational Psychology; and Frits Perls, a medical doctor and neuropsychiatrist, developed the Gestalt School of Psychology, an ‘existential’ theory of Psychology focusing on personal responsibility and experiences (Griggs, 2014). The analysis of the behaviors of the ‘Exceptional People’ would result in the development of intervention techniques, methods and models that could be used by practitioners to modify thought patterns and behavior in clients (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). The aforementioned concepts will be used in the exploration of the criminal thought processes in study participants.

In this study, offenders will be given the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) followed by an interview. NLP theory will be given consideration when analyzing research data.

Research Questions

This proposed research study will explore the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders after assessing Criminal Thinking via PICTS and through interviews with study participants. As such, the researcher will seek answers to the following questions:

-RQ1. Are criminal offenders aware that maladaptive patterns of thought known as Criminal Thinking Errors contribute to criminal behavior?

-RQ2. Are criminal offenders aware of the factors present that may influence the development of Criminal Thinking Errors?

Conceptual Framework

This study is based on the theory that criminal behavior can be attributed to Criminal Thinking errors that may be present in everyone (Waters, 1990). This Criminal Thinking Theory explains criminal behavior as learned behavior resulting from the maladaptive thought processes that occur over time ((Waters, 2003).

Criminal Thinking

The theories that explain criminal behavior as the result of ‘thinking errors’, which lead to a certain ‘criminal lifestyles’, are among the most widely held views across many disciplines interested in the explanation of crime and possible treatments for criminal offenders (Waters, 1990). The premise of this study is that when an individual makes Criminal Thinking Errors over time and on a continual basis, their thoughts form maladaptive ‘thought patters’ that lead to the development of a ‘criminal lifestyle’, where criminal behavior becomes permeates their entire life (Waters, 2003).

The concepts behind the theories that Criminal Thinking Errors and the development of a Criminal Lifestyle have their origins in the belief that certain individual maladaptive thoughts produce ‘thought patters’ in some, which cumulatively reinforce each other over time and lead to the aberrant, or criminal behaviors (Waters, 2003a). The theories hold that while everyone may have criminal thoughts, or ‘criminal thinking errors’, the differences between the characterization of criminals and non-criminals is the frequency of these thoughts, the patterns of thoughts that develop, and the resulting criminal behavior along a continuum (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). The person with pervasive and continued criminal thought patters and

‘thinking errors’ will develop the criminal lifestyle, and their lives’ will revolve around criminal activity, as they become the de facto ‘criminal’ (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976).

Neurolinguistic Programing

This study will explore the thought processes related to Criminal Thinking Errors present in criminal offenders during an interview, after an assessment of Criminal Thinking. Concepts developed in Neurolinguistic Programing will be considered by the researcher (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). The basis of the theory behind NLP is that when certain techniques and methods are employed by a practitioner of NLP that focus on the achievement of goals, the elimination of negative barriers, the building of self- esteem and self-confidence, creating stable relationships and the achievement of peak performance, that negative thought patters and behaviors can be explained, modified or eliminated and replaced with positive ones (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). Specifically, this study will examine criminal thought processes of the offender. Concepts developed in NLP will be considered by the researcher (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015).

Significance of the Study

The continuation of criminal behavior by those released from incarceration remains an important issue across many fields of interest. Certainly, a reduction or cessation in the continuation of criminal behavior by offenders once released may have a positive impact on potential victims of crime, in the lives of offenders and their families, and in society as a whole.

This study seeks to add to the body of knowledge in existence regarding the thought process employed in offenders involved in criminal behavior to aid in further research.

There have been numerous research studies examining various aspects of offending and re-offending. Durose, Cooper and Snyder (2014) conducted a comprehensive study of inmates

released from prison in 30 different states from 2005 to 2007 and found that 67.8 were re-arrested within 3 years and 76.6% were rearrested within 5 years (Durose, Cooper and Snyder (2014). They also found that in the 23 states who provided data on offenders returning to prison, that 49.7 % were returned to prison within 3 years and 55.1% within 5 years because they either violated probation or parole, or committed a new offense (Durose, Cooper and Snyder (2014).

In 2016 the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) commissioned a study to assess the various programs offered to incarcerated offenders (Boston Consulting Group, 2016). The study was conducted by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) to determine if improvements could be made in FBOP programs, in order to better prepare offenders to return to society and if more could be done to reduce re-offending (Boston Consulting Group, 2016). The study concluded that approximately 1500 inmates per year housed in medium security FBOP institutions are not provided requisite ‘cognitive restructuring programs’; that 11% of all inmates need more mental health treatment; and that the ‘sequencing’ of programs do not take advantage of the cognitive behavioral modification programs (Boston Consulting Group, 2016). The study found a huge gap in behavioral modification programs offered nationally by the FBOP that focus on reducing criminal thinking, social problem solving, impulse control and emotional self-regulation (Boston Consulting Group, 2016). While the authors site research concluding that programs stressing behavioral modification reduces re-offending by 20-30%, they suggest that current low enrollment in these programs is a result of poor resource allocation, unique admissions criteria, and lack of participation incentives (Boston Consulting Group, 2016).

The proposed study will explore the Criminal Thinking in criminal offenders to advance the current state of knowledge of the thought processes inherent in criminal offenders.

Information learned through this study may aid in the development and implementation of alternative treatment programs to reduce Criminal Thinking and eventually criminal behavior.

Assumptions

The proposed study explored the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders via an interview, after an assessment of Criminal Thinking Errors. As such, researchers assume that all participants will provide honest answers to the assessment; will attend and participate in the discussions; and will be truthful in answering interview questions, and will fulfill any other study requirements.

Limitations

The researcher located individuals who have self-identified as criminal offenders, via a chain-referral sampling. The researcher may not be able to verify if the self-identified offender is providing accurate information regarding past criminal activity, convictions or incarcerations, and will rely on the study participants to be truthful with the information provided.

Delimitations

The participants of this study were limited to English speaking criminal offenders who have self-reported as having been criminal offenders in the past. It is not feasible to seek a population of criminal offenders which to draw from data, who do not speak English.

This qualitative study used interviews of participants who will be asked questions regarding Criminal Thinking processes and criminal behavior. As such, their answers may provide insights into Criminal Thinking and the processes used that result in criminal behavior.

Summary

As crime and criminal offending continues to be a major concern to society, those across many disciplines seek to enhance the body of knowledge regarding the nature of crime and criminal behavior; the means and methods to reduce crime; and in providing effective treatment for offenders. Many theories have been established that offer explanations of who commits crime and why; methods of crime prevention; and the optimal types and methods used in the treatment of criminal offenders. This research study focuses on one theory on criminal behavior, which attributes criminal behavior to a series of maladaptive thought patterns called Criminal Thinking Errors (Walters, 2003). The researcher made inquiry into the lived experiences of criminal offenders by exploration of thoughts and feeling in regards to Criminal Thinking Errors. This was accomplished by through an interview that may help to explore patterns of thought, toward the goal of identifying the thought processes used by criminal offenders.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

The literature review conducted here establishes the need for further research in the methods of reducing criminal activity in criminal offenders. While cognitive behavioral therapy and other methods are currently used to treat criminal offenders during incarceration, it appears that treatment is sporadic and largely inadequate to the large numbers of offenders currently incarcerated, due to budget and time constraints (Collier, 2014). The study explored the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders. Insights gained herein may lead to further research into the treatment of criminal offenders, and the development and implementation of alternative programs to reduce Criminal Thinking. The study will consist of an assessment, (PICTS) followed by an interview of participants to evaluate Criminal Thinking processes as they relate to criminal behavior in former criminal offenders.

This literature review examined previous research electronically from psychology and criminology data bases provided by Walden University, including PsycINFO, PscyARTICLES. Pub-Med, as well as U.S. Government Publications, professional Journals and text books. Keywords searched were Neurolinguistic Programing, prison-based treatment, criminal offenders, theories of crime, prison reform, Criminal Thinking Errors and Criminal Thinking error measures.

Chapter 2 will provide a brief review of the evolution of law enforcement and corrections over the past several decades, that has resulted in prison overcrowding and the lack of adequate treatment of criminal offenders. Also included is a review of research on criminal offending and mental illness, theories of crime and present prison-based treatment for offenders. Additionally,

this chapter will offer a comprehensive explanation of Neurolinguistic Programming: its origins, methods and strategies and techniques to be used in construction of the informational session.

Background

A shift in our nations policies and procedures for dealing with crime and criminal offenders occurred in the late 1960's and has led to a myriad of issues related to the administration of law enforcement practices (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). This shift has led to an overwhelming increase in the number of offenders arrested, prosecuted and incarcerated. While proponents argue that the 'get tough' on criminals' philosophies have had a positive impact in crime reduction, critics would argue that the numbers of offenders prosecuted is unsustainable, and the punitive treatment of criminal offenders serving sentences in the nations correctional facilities has had a deleterious effect (Chan & Shapiro, 2007).

When the focus of corrections officials shifted from a philosophy of providing rehabilitative measures for inmates to a punitive focus and the simple warehousing of those incarcerated rather than one of rehabilitation, the amount of criminal re-offending began to rise (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). Programs that had been geared toward the rehabilitation and treatment of inmates were reduced or eliminated and money earmarked for those programs was diverted elsewhere (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). The reduction in rehabilitation and treatment programs, coupled with the Draconian sentencing structures, including the minimum mandatory sentences established by state legislators and the U.S. Congress, has resulted overwhelming overcrowding in county jails, state and federal prisons (Chan & Shapiro, 2007).

Those in government and in the fields of public safety, law, health care, behavioral sciences, law enforcement and corrections all have a stake in how these strict policies have affected society. While there is little debate that crime and criminality take a great toll on

individual victims of crime, their families and communities, so to have the strict enforcement and correction policies have a negative effect on the offender (Collier, 2014).

While it is the role of government to institute measures to protect its citizens from criminal offenders and to reduce crime, the methods with which the government has employed to combat crime by which offenders are identified, apprehended, prosecuted and incarcerated are varied (Collier, 2014). Some would reason that the reduction in crime over the past decade(s) is proof positive that the get-tough policies instituted by Congress in enforcement, prosecution and in corrections have been effective (Collier, 2014). However, others would argue that those government policies have led to dire unintended consequences and created a myriad of other pressing societal issues (Benson, 2003). While proponents of get-tough policies point to a de-escalation in violent crime, opponents point to mass incarceration and the diminution of the family as a heavy cost (Collier, 2014).

There have been numerous research studies drawing conclusions that confirm that the government has done a great job in reducing crime through beefed up enforcement and in toughening up sentencing laws (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). Other studies are critical of the ways in which government has approached law enforcement and corrections (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). This study will not debate the merits of the methods by which the government chooses to enforce the law or incarcerate offenders. Rather the focus of this study will be to investigate a theory that attributes criminal offending to maladaptive thought process called criminal Thinking Errors (Collier, 2014). The research proposed here is necessary, as mass incarceration has proven to have deleterious effects on a great many in our society and methods of explaining criminal behavior and then treating criminal is needed (Collier, 2014).

There has been research conducted from many fields of study on the effects of mass incarceration and the lack of rehabilitative measures for inmates (Collier, 2014). The concern over the large number of those incarcerated in our nations prisons has been voiced by prison reform advocates for decades (Collier, 2014). They point to philosophies of government prior to the 1970's, when rehabilitation was an integral component of U.S. prison policy (Collier, 2014). Then, many more court sentences mandated treatment for some offenders, and inmates were encouraged to develop occupational skills by participating in vocational or educational programs; to resolve mental health issues by seeking psychological treatment for substance abuse, depression and other psychological disorders in prison-based programs (Collier, 2014).

Criminal Offending and Mental Illness

One consequence of the shift in philosophy leading to mass incarceration is the increase of those with mental illness serving sentences in jails and prisons instead of being treated in psychiatric hospitals, or in community mental health facilities (Collier, 2014). In the mid-1960's a policy of the deinstitutionalization of those with psychological disorders was implemented (Collier, 2014). The theory was that mental patients could be better served in community mental health centers, rather than in psychiatric hospitals. As such, legislation was passed that allowed many to leave the psychiatric facilities and return to their communities to be treated there (Collier, 2014). Unfortunately, the funding for the community mental health facilities was never acted upon, and the former psychiatric hospital patients were left with sub-standard care and few if any resources (Collier, 2014). The consequences were dire, as many were left homeless. Many more became involved in substance abuse, and in criminal activities and were incarcerated (Collier, 2014).

Prison reform advocates point to the dramatic rise in instances of mental health problems in incarcerated offenders over the past three decades, including substance abuse disorder, as reason for a policy change now to include more effective mental health treatment (Whitten, 2010). The U. S. Justice Department estimates that 45% of federal inmates, 56% of state inmates and 64% of those in County Jails suffer from mental illnesses, including: clinical depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia (Anasseril, 2007). Studies estimate that as many as 70% of all inmates are either suffering from substance abuse disorder upon entry to a correctional facility or were under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they committed the crime for which they are serving their sentence (Whitten, 2010). Many research studies linking mental illness to re-offending have concluded that prison based comprehensive mental health counseling can be effective in reducing the effects of those mental illnesses (Torrey, Dailey, Lamb, Sinclair and Snook, 2017). However, in the vast majority of cases, the treatment it is not forthcoming (Torrey et al, 2017).

Research shows that inmates who are treated for mental illness are less likely to re-offend, with one study concluding that a comprehensive mental health program reduced the number of re-offenders by 50% in (Torrey et al, 2017). However, despite those conclusions, there are strong indications from research that inmates across all correctional institutions do not receive adequate mental health services required (Torrey et al, 2017).

As a result, the re-arrest and incarceration of these individuals are often the natural sequelae of untreated mental illness (Varney, 2014). Unfortunately, in the system as presently constituted, diagnosis and treatment for those with psychological impairments or disorders is decidedly inadequate (Varney, 2014). Estimates are that only 33% of mentally ill inmates receive any treatment while incarcerated (Anasseril, 2007). Most with treatable conditions languish in

correctional facilities with little or no psychological counseling, or mental health or substance abuse treatment (Anasseril, 2007). As such, relapse and re-offending for those with even minor disorders who are released with little or no treatment is extremely high (Varney, (2014). The systematic linking of programs for those released mentally ill offenders with state mental health programs are rare and estimates are that 50% of those released will return to prison within three years (Varney, (2014).

While there is agreement in research across many disciplines that many criminal offenders suffer from ‘mental illness’, there are certainly a wide range of psychological conditions that qualify as mental illness (Torrey et al, 2017). Also, within each category of each psychological disorder is a level of severity (Torrey et al, 2017). While a high percentage of criminal offenders are found to be suffering from a mental illness, the type and severity can vary greatly (Torrey et al, 2017). Often, the terms mental illness, mental disorder, abnormal behavior, psychological disorder and psychiatric disorder can and are used interchangeably in research, diagnosis and treatment. Herein they will be as well (Torrey et al, 2017).

The standard now for assessing and diagnosing mental illness or abnormal behavior among clinicians in the medical, nursing, psychiatric and psychology fields is the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5th Edition (DSM-5) (American Psychiatric Association, 2016). According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), a behavior can present as a psychiatric or psychological disorder if certain elements are present, including: Suffering, a condition where psychological pain and substantial distress are experienced from the subject’s thought process; Maladaptiveness, where a behavior interferes with the well- being of the subject and the ability to experience joy (Butcher, Hooley, & Mineka, 2013).

As such, many varied and differentiated behaviors qualify as a psychiatric disorder. The DSM-5 lists 19 categories of disorders, and the specific set of behaviors that constitute the disorder. These include: Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders, Bipolar and Related Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Obsessive-Compulsive and Related Disorders, Depressive Disorders and Personality Disorders (APA, 2013).

Certainly, some of the disorders within each category are more likely to be associated with criminal behavior than others. Some studies have found that those suffering from psychotic disorders are more likely to be involved in violent offences, but not in non-violent offense (Tiihonen, Isohanni, Räsänen, Koiranen and Moring, 1997). Another study found that elevated rates of violent offending occurred in those with major mental disorders, defined as schizophrenia along with organic, affective and other psychoses (Brennen, Medick and Hodgins, 2000). There appears to be a consensus that individuals with psychotic and externalizing behavioral disorders, are more likely to engage in higher levels of violence than individuals with other forms of mental illness (Stevens, 2013).

As might be expected, research studies have confirmed a link between Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD), and criminal offending, as by definition ASPD has included, “gross disparity between behavior and prevailing social norms; and repeated acts that are grounds for arrest” (Stevens, 2013). Although the criterion for diagnosing Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), has continued to change, it is worthy to note that research has found that ADHD is prevalent in prison populations, and is considered a factor in criminal offending (Young and Thome, 2011). Often, ADHD is found to be comorbid with conduct disorder in childhood, and prevalent in those with ASPD, increasing the likelihood of criminal behavior later in life (Young and Thome, 2011).

In a research conducted by Hodgins and Janson (2002), an analysis was conducted of the criminal convictions of four groups from the Stockholm Cohort (children born in Stockholm in 1953), suffering from various psychological disorders (mental retardation; major mental disorders including schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and major depression; substance abuse disorder; other mental disorders; and one group with no mental illness (Hodgins and Janson, 2002). They found that convictions for criminal offenses in the non-afflicted group was at 33% and found elevated instances of criminal convictions in those with other disorders, 38%; major mental disorders, 50%; mental retardation, at 57%; and 93% for those with alcohol or drug disorders (Hodgins and Janson, 2002).

There have been countless studies conducted examining the relation of substance abuse disorders and instances of criminal offending (Belenco, Hiller and Hamilton, 2014). There is agreement that substance abuse disorders have a significant effect of criminal offending among all populations, and when substance abuse disorder is comorbid with other psychological disorders, the likelihood of criminal offending increases further (Belenco, Hiller and Hamilton, 2014).

Crime and Criminal Thinking

While many offenders suffer from psychological disorders, the reality is that the many more do not (Tittle, 2000). There is agreement from many fields that while mental illness is one of many criminogenic factors that influence behavior in an offender, mental illness is not necessarily the determining factor (Tittle, 2000). Often, criminal offenders have no history of mental illness (Tittle, 2000). As such, researchers have sought explanations for crime and criminal offending unrelated to mental illness. While there have been many theories that have developed over time that offer explanation of the reasons for criminal behavior not associated

with mental illness, this study will focus on the theory that developed by research conducted by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) and others, who explain criminal behavior as a function of the development of thought patterns characterized as Criminal Thinking Errors in offenders.

The purpose of the Yochelson and Samenow (1976) research was to “develop a conceptual framework based on a dissection of thought process” (Yochelson and Samenow (1976). The Criminal Personality theory that emerged was based on a 16- year longitudinal study of mental patients, conducted at St. Elizabeth’s Psychiatric Hospital located in Washington D.C (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). Their exhaustive research focused on the minds of “hardened criminals” and included in-depth, comprehensive interviews and evaluations of men who exhibited a lifetime of criminal offending (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). According to their original theory, criminal activity is not the result of psychological, sociological, or physiological afflictions, but is a conscious decision (Reid, 1998). They believe that criminals should be viewed as rational actors, similar to non-criminals, the differences characterized by ‘errors’ the thought processes of criminals, resulting in criminal thinking patterns (Bartholomew, Morgan, Mitchell and Van Horn, 2017).

The Criminal Personality theory constructed by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) was in contradiction of many of the mainstream criminological theories that hold that the origins of crime can be attributed to internal and external forces beyond control of the criminal (Dienstbier, 1977). The many theories based on positivism included socioeconomic factors, poverty, population density, social structure, internalized behaviors of others, brain structure and genetics, as some of the factors to be considered when explaining criminal behavior (Tittle, 2000). These theories were rejected by Yochelson and Samenow (1976), who felt that they removed the responsibility from the criminal for their behavior (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). They

believed that a 'criminal personality' exists in some and that criminality is a choice (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976).

In the development of a Criminal Personality, each individual thinking pattern emerges from a population of patterns, with no one pattern viewed as causal, but act in combination with other patterns where the Criminal Personality develops (Reid, 1998). These thought patterns direct the actor to a specific end, where the collective thought patterns become the essence of the criminal mind (Reid, 1998). Their theory identified 52 criminal thinking errors that define building blocks of the patterns of thought present in criminals (Reid, 1998). The theory promoted the idea that while non-criminals may also display criminal thinking errors, that criminals make these errors with greater frequency and in ways where the errors amplify one another; establish the criminal thinking patterns; and ultimately the Criminal Personality is created (Reid, 1998). The authors believed that each of these errors may be present in non-criminals and may exhibit themselves periodically individually (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). However, the distinction between criminals and non-criminals is the frequency in which these errors occurs in the criminal and how the combination of these errors leads to the creation of the Criminal Personality (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976).

The authors believe that criminality can be characterized in a population as occurring on a continuum (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). The degree to which one engages in criminal thinking falls along the continuum, at one end the hardworking responsible person; the irresponsible but non-arrestable person; the 'petty thief; and at the other end the professional criminal (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976).

According to the authors, the Criminal Personality develops early in life, where often the pre-school child exhibits thought patterns manifested in behavior described as thrill seeking and

energetic; where the child exhibits a short attention span, hyperkinesia (hyperactivity) and irritability (Dienstbier, 1977). The 'criminal child' may alternate between periods of good and bad behavior, exhibiting the lack of remorse of, and justification for bad behavior; a mistrust of family and rejection of their guidance; the avoidance of responsibility; and the inability to plan for the future (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). The school age criminal will seek older playmates, emulate criminal behavior of others, separate themselves from non-criminals, and often prey upon their weaker 'straight' peers (Dienstbier, 1977). The authors suggest that the criminal child is rarely rejected by parents and schools, who become guilt ridden, cooperating, and tolerant, while conscientiously searching for ways to motivate the criminal child toward non-criminal behavior (Dienstbier, 1977). However, left without effective treatment, the behavior becomes self-perpetuating, with the Criminal Personality emerging (Dienstbier, 1977).

Yochelson and Samenow (1976) suggest that there may periods where a potential criminal may find an equivalent to criminal activity, described as 'limbo', where the criminal is not directly involved in arrestable criminal activity, but still exhibits irresponsible thinking (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). Another phase identified by the authors is describes as a 'monasticism' where the criminal believes that his 'sins' require a period of abstinence from criminal activity (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). As those with a Criminal Personality have persistent self-concepts alternating between worthlessness and overvaluation; are prone to lie seemingly without reason; maintain suspicion of the actions or motives of others; and have little insight into their own behaviors, the 'hard core' criminal will ultimately return to criminal behavior (Dienstbier, 1977).

At the heart of the Criminal Thinking theory are the 52 criminal thinking errors identified by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) that contribute to the evolution of the Criminal

Personality. These characteristic thinking errors made by criminals were divided up into three categories. The first, called *Criminal Thinking Patterns* and include: Fear- Intense, persistent and widespread and intense fears are thought to be persistent in the criminal, most notably the fear of being caught; Anger- thought to be the way for the criminal to gain control of a situation, and a basic part of life; Zero- the view of oneself as absolute worthlessness, futility and hopelessness; The Power Thrust- the need to control, dominance and power and the excitement of getting away with a forbidden act; Fragmentation- the radical fluctuation in the mental state of a criminal personality, where commitments to something are made then broken routinely; Suggestibility- while criminals are resistant to notions of responsible behavior and thinking, they are suggestible for behaviors that lead to the attainment of what they desire; Lying- as a means of maintaining control, habitual and premeditated lying becomes incorporated into the criminal thought process and becomes automatic (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976; Bartholomew, Morgan, Mitchell and Van Horn, 2017).

The second category is called: *Automatic Errors of Thinking*, and include: The Victim Stance- By placing blame on others when held accountable for their irresponsible behavior, they view themselves as victims; Lack of Time Perspective- immediate gratification predominates the criminal thought process; Failure to Assume Obligation- Viewed as a position of weakness, obligations interfere with criminal behavior, and may be met with resentment, irritation and anger; Failure to Assume Responsible Initiatives- The belief is that the criminal will avoid responsibilities as they may expose a weakness or ineptitude, provide no guarantee of triumph, and fail to provide excitement; Pretentiousness- While criminals rarely strive to achieve, they often have an inflated notion of their own capabilities; Poor Decision Making for Responsible

Living- Criminals display faulty reasoning, fact finding, cost considerations and options for important personal decisions (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976).

The third category, called *From Idea Through Execution*, includes: Building Up the Opinion of Oneself as a Good Person- Criminals reject the notion that they are criminals and form the belief that they are good people. This allows them to continue to commit crimes, and postpones the reemergence of the Zero State; Corrosion and Cutoff- Deterrents to criminal behavior, i.e. religion; a wish to change; and humanitarian feelings, are overcome through the mental processes of slowly eliminating the deterrents, and instantaneously implementing the desire to engage in criminal activity; Deferment- Criminals are thought to put off actions in three major categories: committing the ultimate crime, going straight, and minor daily responsibilities; Super- optimism- Criminal's view an idea or a possibility of action as an accomplished fact, and ideas are reality (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976; Bartholomew, Morgan, Mitchell and Van Horn, 2017).

After Yochelson's death in 1976, Samenow continued his research. He believed that that the basic premise was that Criminal Thinking could be treated, writing: "behavior follows in the wake of thought [and] to eliminate criminal behavior, it is essential first to change the way a [person] thinks" (p. 296) and that "the change process calls for acquiring moral values . . . to live without injuring others..." (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976, p. 330).

The initial research by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) received its share of criticism for the manner in which the study was conducted. Critics, including Walters (2003, 2006, 2016) who would go on to develop one of the most noted criminal thinking model based on the Yochelson and Samenow (1976) research, felt that the weaknesses in the initial research included: lack of

generalization and applicability; failure to recognize environmental influences on thinking errors; and exhibited insufficient operationalization (Mandracchia, Morgan, Garos and Garland, 2007).

Although critical of the original research Walters' (2006) conceptualization of criminal thinking was based on the Yochelson and Samenow ideas that the anti-social behavior exhibited by criminals was the result of free choice; that the expression of free choice was the continuation of criminal thinking; taking responsibility for one's actions was necessary to change criminal thinking and the associated criminal behavior (Mandracchia, Morgan, Garos and Garland, 2007).

It was Waters' believed that a 'criminal lifestyle' developed as a result of criminal thinking processes that could be explained in terms of 8 faulty cognitive thinking patterns (Walters, 2001). These patterns, based on the criminal thinking errors identified by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) lead to a system of beliefs which served to justify, rationalize and support criminal or antisocial behavior (Walters, 2001). Walters felt that while each of the criminal thinking patterns are interrelated, they are distinct cognitive aspects which collectively enabled the criminal the impunity to make rash, self-indulgent decisions, that are interpersonally invasive and contrary to social norms (Walters, 2001). Walters felt that these patters, although irrationally based and unorganized, are sufficient in scope to fulfil their criminal's desire for immediate gratification (Walters, 2001).

Walters (2001) identified the 8 thinking errors that are the basis for the formation of the criminal lifestyle as: Mollification- a tendency to rationalize and to deny harm to others; to divert blame by questioning the motives of others; Cutoff- the career criminal quickly stops evaluating the outcome of his behavior; Entitlement- The right to do whatever one wants; Power Orientation- the view that others or situations are either strong or weak, where the weak are exploited; Sentimentality- the concept that good deeds will counteract criminal behaviors; Super

Optimism- an overestimation of ability, and the notion of invincibility; Cognitive indolence-laziness, taking the path of least resistance; Discontinuity-lack of self-discipline (Walters, 2003).

It is suggested by Walters that there are conditions that foster the formation of the criminal lifestyle, and he identifies both personal variables, associated with the individual's intelligence, heredity, temperament; and situational variables, identified as those present in one's environment, including socioeconomic status; exposure to violence; erratic parental involvement and discipline as contributing factors (Walters, 1990). Walters (1990) believes that the manner of cognition that develops is the result of the combination of personal and situational variables and that ultimately the criminal lifestyle is a choice made by the criminal (Walters, 1990).

Walters suggested that in general, criminals all have similar certain personality traits and describes the criminal as "impulsive, irresponsible, pleasure-seeking, self-centered people", free of negative emotions like guilt and fear, that ordinarily control behavior (Walters, 2001). According to Walters, (2001) the criminal lifestyle is characterized by poor interpersonal relationships; the need for excitement; and with high instances of drug and alcohol abuse (Walters, 2001).

The many research studies conducted by Walters led to the development of several refinements in his theory and included the creation of the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS), an assessment used as an empirical measurement of the aforementioned 8 cognitive processes/thinking errors, as well as a subjects' "General Criminal Thinking (GCT)" and two "subfactors" described as "Proactive (P) and Reactive (R) composite scales" (Walters, 2007).

After he developed the PICTS, Walters conducted numerous studies on its effectiveness and established its internal validity and reliability (Mandracchia, Morgan, Garos and Garland,

2007). Continued research by Waters led to several refinements of the PICTS. He describes the PICTS in his 2002 study as a “self-report measure containing 80 items designed to assess crime supporting cognitive patterns” (Walters, 2002). In that study, which included both female and male inmates as subjects, Walters (2002) established that PICTS possesses test-retest stability; has moderately high internal consistency in the thinking, validity and content scales (Walters, 2002). Walters (2002) concluded that in addition to correlating with measures of past criminality, the PICTS shows that several of the thinking and control scales are “capable of predicting future adjustment/release outcomes” at what he describes as a “low but statistically significant” level (Walters, 2002).

Criminal Thinking Errors in Offenders with Mental Illness and Psychological Disorders

While theories on the causes of criminal behavior can point to psychological disorders and mental illness as causes for some criminal behavior and to the prevalence of Criminal Thinking Errors in offenders with no signs of mental illness, Morgan, Fisher, Duan, Mandracchia and Murray (2010) thought it prudent to investigate whether those suffering from mental disorders also showed criminal thinking patterns (Morgan, Fisher, Duan, Mandracchia and Murray, 2010). Those authors conducted research of both male and female offenders who were diagnosed with ‘serious mental illness’ (Morgan et al, 2010). The authors found that the mentally disordered offenders produced scores on both the Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified (CSS-M) and the Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS) similar to non-mentally ill offenders (Morgan et al, 2010). The authors discovered that the “clinical presentation” of criminals, psychiatric patients and “mentally disordered offenders” is the same (Morgan et al, 2010). As a result of their research, they stressed the need for prison-based treatment for those offenders with co-occurring mental health issues and criminal thinking patterns (Morgan et al, 2010).

The Morgan et al (2010) research did not include individuals with Substance Abuse Disorder in their study. However, according to research, as many as 70% of all offenders have substance abuse disorder or have been heavily involved in drug and alcohol abuse (Belenco, Hiller and Hamilton, 2014). When Substance Abuse Disorder is taken into account, the number of inmates in need of treatment is much higher (Belenco, Hiller and Hamilton, 2014). According to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, there have been a number of studies over the past several that have concluded that there is a high prevalence of substance abuse comorbidity with other psychological disorders (Volkow, 2010). Documented in multiple national population studies, data concludes that individuals suffering from anxiety or mood disorders, Antisocial Personality Disorder, or Conduct Disorder are twice as likely to have Substance Abuse Disorder (Volkow, 2010). Also, individuals with Substance Abuse Disorder are twice as likely to suffer from anxiety and mood disorders (Volkow, 2010).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Criminal Offending Treatment Programs

The theory developed by Yochelson and Samenow (1976) and refined by Walters, along with the suggested methods for testing the extent of ‘Criminal Thinking’ in offenders, has formed the basis for many models used among correctional psychologists, forensic psychologists, psychotherapists and other clinicians interested in assessing and treating criminal behaviors in offenders (Clark, 2010). Many of the prison-based substance abuse and mental health treatment programs in use today have as their theoretical base, the ‘Criminal Thinking’ premise and use Cognitive Behavioral Therapy CBT techniques to correct Criminal Thinking Errors and modify criminal behavior in offenders (Clark, 2010). These programs focus on how criminal thinking errors impact criminal behavior and substance use, by using CBT to change dysfunctional thought patterns, beliefs, and behaviors (Clark, 2010). The CBT techniques

attempt to substitute notions of personal responsibility, individual accountability, pro-social behaviors for criminal thinking patterns and offer explanation to offenders on how their flawed thinking processes, the cognitive distortions and deficits they experience contribute to their poor decision making (Clark, 2010). The premise of a CBT model is that criminal behavior is learned and can be treated through refocusing cognitive skill from the previous maladaptive thinking patterns to positive ones, where offenders learn moral development, relapse prevention and positive social skills (Clark, 2010).

According to Patricia Clark (2010) of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), prison-based CBT treatment programs are recommended by NIJ for both adult and juvenile offenders (Clark, 2010). The NIJ bases their conclusions on review of numerous research studies identifying CBT as among the most effective, evidence-based treatment methods for improving: means-end problem solving; social skills; moral and critical reasoning; impulse management; self-efficacy and self-control (Clark, 2010). However, prison reform advocates suggest that there are issues with many of the prison-based treatment programs now in use (Clark, 2010).

Critics point to the lack of availability of many programs limiting the number of offenders who receive the requisite treatment for the potential myriad of issues they face (Smith, 2017). Some criticize the lack of resources devoted to these programs, the overcrowded conditions, understaffing and the lack of qualified clinicians to run the programs (Smith, 2017). They also suggest that program entry requirements may be too strict and that often offenders do not receive treatment until close proximity to their release (Smith, 2017).

Sean Smith (2017) writing for the American Legislative Exchange Council, a leader in criminal justice reform, suggests that overcrowding in federal and state prisons and county jails is a major contributor to the lack of program space for many inmates who need treatment (Smith,

2017). Smith references a study published by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (G.A.O.) in 2012, which sites that the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) reached a high of 39% over capacity and discusses some of the negative effects on the inmate population, including the lack of program space (Mauer, 2012).

The FBOP offers their version of a treatment program based on the Criminal Thinking Error theory and using a CBT model for treatment for those with Substance Abuse Disorder (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2017). The intensive 500- hour, nine-month substance abuse treatment program, called RDAP (Residential Drug Abuse Program) is offered to inmates with a documented substance abuse disorder one year prior to incarceration, on a voluntary basis (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2017). Although touted by the FBOP as an ‘effective’ program, there are long waiting lists for entrance and most substance abusers languish in prison for years with untreated disorders (Smith, 2017). While the program is incentivized by a reduction in the sentence for an inmate who completes the program and its ‘aftercare’ component, an inmate with a history of violent or weapons offense(s) is not eligible for the incentive, and therefore unlikely to participate (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2017).

While the FBOP claims to offer other residential non-drug treatment programs, focusing on the “.... emotional and behavioral responses to difficult situations....”, critics say that in reality, mental health treatment is severely lacking (Smith, 2017). Prison reform advocates suggest that while the FBOP has “mental health” facilities, only those suffering from the most severe disorders are treated, and that most correctional facilities devote few resources toward mental health treatment of any kind to those with less severe disorders (Smith, 2017).

The Neurolinguistic Programing Alternative

The purpose of this study is to examine if learning about the thought processes leading to criminal behavior can be effective in helping to identify maladaptive patterns of thought in a population of criminal offenders, to aid in further research regarding the treatment of offenders.

Here, the researcher will consider the NLP theory in analysis of data collected. In NLP, human behavior patterns are explained through the connection of neurological processes (neuro), language (linguistic) and experience (programming) (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985). NLP theory, developed by Bandler and Grinder (1975) holds that people experience the world through their senses and that the information they acquire is translated into thought processes; that language is used to capture and conceptualize lived experiences and to then communicate those experiences to others; while programing consists of the internal strategies, cognitive processes and thinking patterns that are used to learn, evaluate, make decisions, solve problems and attain results (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985).

NLP identifies four 'pillars' that serve as the foundation of the theory: Rapport- building relationships with others; Sensory Awareness-making full use of sensory capabilities; Outcome Thinking- focuses on results; Behavioral Flexibility- employing new approaches to solving problems (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985). NLP practitioners seek to change negative behaviors and thinking through various strategies and techniques that inform and train the subjects in how to employ concepts and methods from the four pillars (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985).

A practitioner of NLP will attempt to manipulate inner sensory processes and thoughts, preliminarily by using words in a psychoanalytic setting (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). The practitioner can structure these training sessions using various psychotherapeutic models, including Rational Emotive Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Cognitive

Behavioral Therapy (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). Thought patterns will be manipulated and behavior will be modified based on the techniques and methods within the framework of NLP, with the practitioner using the model that they are most comfortable with and the one with which they have the requisite knowledge (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015).

Grinder and Bandler (1975) believed that people view the world through their own individual model, where some are able to negotiate the world in a productive manner, while others are not, based on their model of perception. They believed that models of perception can be modified and those unproductive or destructive models can be reduced or eliminated and replaced with productive ones, through the use of NLP techniques in various psychoanalytic realms (Grinder and Bandler, 1975).

Neurolinguistic Programing Theory

Neurolinguistic Programing (NLP) was developed by Bandler and Grinder (1975) as an approach to personal development through communication and utilizes techniques developed for use in a psychotherapeutic setting (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). The basis of the theory behind NLP as treatment is that when certain techniques and methods are employed by the practitioner of NLP, negative thought patters and behaviors can be modified or eliminated in the client and replaced with positive ones (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). The NLP outcomes focus on the achievement of goals through the elimination of negative barriers, the building of self- esteem and self-confidence, the creation of stable relationships and the achievement of peak performance (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015).

The creators of NLP believe that there is a systematic connection between the neurological processes, language and the resulting behavior patterns (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). As behaviors are learned through experience, they therefore can be modified or changed

(Grinder and Bandler, 1975). The purpose of NLP is to change existing negative thought processes and behaviors to positive ones which focus on the achievement of certain positive behavioral goals (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). The creators of NLP have identified certain optimum sets of behaviors based on positive thought patterns possessed by ‘Exceptional People’ and have developed techniques and methods that allow others to acquire those optimum traits and characteristics as their own (Gary and Burk, 2014). NLP techniques are designed to allow anyone to acquire the skills of the ‘Exceptional People’. Grinder and Bandler (1975) believe that ‘Exceptional People’ have positive traits, characteristics and behaviors that can be emulated and copied by a client, to incorporate them as their own patterns of behavior (Grinder and Bandler, 1975).

The original NLP theory was based on data collected from the behaviors of those ‘Exceptional People’, as observed from the theoretical perspective that their patterns of behavior could be analyzed using cybernetic techniques, and then copied, to create a methodology for modelling (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). Included in the group whose characteristics Grinder and Bandler (1975) sought to have emulated by their NLP clients are: Eric Erikson, a world-renowned psychologist and psychoanalyst and Harvard Professor of psychology; Virginia Satir, a psychologist who was a pioneer in the field of family therapy and considered an innovator in the field of Organizational Psychology; and Frits Perls, a medical doctor and neuropsychiatrist, developed the Gestalt School of Psychology, an ‘existential’ theory of Psychology focusing on personal responsibility and experiences (Griggs, 2014). The analysis of the behaviors of the ‘Exceptional People’ would result in the development of intervention techniques, methods and models that could be used by practitioners to modify thought patterns and behavior in clients (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015).

According to theory, NLP is comprised of three components and the concepts that pertain to each component (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). In the first, *Subjectivity*, the theory holds that we experience the world subjectively and subjective representations of those experiences are created (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). As such, those subjective representations are established via our five senses and in language in a discernable pattern (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). When we experience something, a subjective representation is created and when we necessary, we recall these representations in the terms in which they were experienced: through taste, touch, smell, sight and/or hearing (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). These subjective experiences shape our behavior and while positive, skillful, ‘normal’ behavior is created in this manner, so too are pathological and maladaptive behaviors (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). NLP theory teaches that learned behavior can be modified through manipulation of subjective representations (Grinder and Bandler, 1975).

The second component of NLP, *Consciousness*, is described as a bifurcated element, where everything that we are aware of at any given time is said to be in our conscious mind; and that all other subjective representations are relegated to the unconscious mind, to be recalled as is necessary (Gary and Burk, 2014). Our present conscious awareness allows us to navigate through what we are experiencing, and what is contained in our unconscious can be brought to the conscious mind (Gary and Burk, 2014). NLP theory holds that Learning, the third component, occurs in the unconscious mind (Gary and Burk, 2014). NLP emphasizes that *Learning* is imitative, in that we construct a ‘model’ based on our experiences and that we reproduce what we have experienced in the form of our own behavior (Gary and Burk, 2014). We learn through our interactions with our environment and our subjective experiences create patterns of thought and the resulting behaviors (Gary and Burk, 2014).

NLP theory suggests that the human brain, sensory and nervous systems are ‘eliminative’ rather than ‘productive’ (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). The construction of those human processes seeks to limit what we are exposed to, like a ‘reducing valve’, in order that we are not overwhelmed with stimuli, rendering it impossible for us to process anything (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). NLP holds that our subjective experiences are shaped by sensory ‘filters’ which limit exposure and therefore are responsible for how much information we process (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). There are ‘filters’ related to our species (neurological), to our culture (social) and to us as individuals (personal) (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). As humans, we are all similarly constructed and are bound by biology to have certain abilities and shortcomings which shape our subjective experiences (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). However, those subjective experiences are also shaped by the society in which we live and our individual characteristics (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). Therefore, each model of the world will be different for each person, based on their experiences and how those experiences are perceived (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). As such, each person’s behavior is shaped by their unique model of the world (Grinder and Bandler, 1975).

Submodalities

One of the main concepts in the theory of changing behavior with Neurolinguistic Programming is that of Submodalities. In the field of NLP, our five senses (visual, auditory, kinesthetic, olfactory and gustatory) are referred to as modalities (Gary and Burk, 2014). However, each of these representational systems are broken down further into smaller subjective structural subdivisions (Gary and Burk, 2014). One example would be the level of sound, another the sweetness of a food. NLP teaches that behavior is a function of our subjective experiences as encountered through our five senses. NLP theory holds that maladaptive

responses (behaviors) to stimuli we encounter via those senses is learned and can be ‘unlearned’ and replaced with positive behavior. Changing our thought processes through ‘shifts’ in submodalities can result in the desirable behavioral changes (Gary and Burk, 2014).

The NLP practitioner will advance the submodality ‘shifts’ through the use of NLP techniques in order to remove problem thought processes and behavior and replace them with the desired objectives (Gary and Burk, 2014). These submodality ‘shifts’ can result in the change in beliefs, habits and compulsions; foster the creation of understanding of thought patterns; and the motivation to change behavior (Gary and Burk, 2014). NLP teaches that Submodalities are the functional link between the association of emotion and thought, and through which thought is presented to the consciousness (Gary and Burk, 2014). Many NLP training methods or therapeutic interventions are based on the voluntary changing of Submodalities, resulting in the elimination of maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors and replacing them with positive ones.

Neurolinguistic Programing in Practice

NLP has been used to treat phobias, depression, learning disorders and some illnesses, and that results occur often as the result of a single session (Grinder and Bandler, 1975). Generally, NLP Practitioner-Client interaction can be characterized in terms of a series of stages. These stages include rapport building, identifying problem behavior or mental state, establishing goals or outcomes, identifying tools and techniques needed to bring about the outcome, integrating the changes proposed into the client’s pattern of behaviors (Gary and Burk, 2014).

To bring about the desired outcomes, an NLP practitioner can use various techniques within their repertoire to change thought patterns and behavior of a client (Gary and Burk, 2014). One technique is associated with the concept of ‘*anchoring*’, where it is thought that both

negative and positive behaviors are associated with particular thought patterns or mental states and recall of these thought patterns triggers the behavior when the person is exposed to some stimuli (Gary and Burk, 2014). Similar in explanation to classical conditioning, a desired positive behavioral response to a certain stimulus can be achieved by making a connection from the thought to the behavior, or ‘anchoring the desired behavior to the newly created thought or mental state (Gary and Burk, 2014). The anchoring of a behavior to a thought or pattern of thought will enable the client to learn the positive behaviors through the attachment to the mental state(s) (Gary and Burk, 2014).

Another technique of an NLP practitioner is the ‘*Swish*’ pattern, used to disrupt a pattern of thought that had formerly led to an unwanted behavior and to replace that behavior with the desired positive one (Gary and Burk, 2014). Where certain visual ‘cues’ or triggers had led to an unwanted behavior, the client can be reprogrammed to respond in a different manner than previous, through the use of visualization and auditory techniques (Gary and Burk, 2014). The ‘swish’ technique utilizes the manipulation of sub-modalities to replace the unwanted behavior and replace it with a positive one (Gary and Burk, 2014).

Neurolinguistic Program practitioners use the technique called ‘*Reframing*’ to change the manner in which a subject perceives an event and therefore alter its meaning (Gary and Burk, 2014). NLP teaches that when the meaning of an event is changed, the subsequent behavioral responses also change (Gary and Burk, 2014). Using language to reframe an event can allow a subject to change the meaning it holds and establish a different desired behavioral response (Gary and Burk, 2014).

Other techniques include: *Future Pacing*, where a subject is asked to image something happening in the future, while their reactions are monitored by the practitioner. This technique is

used to check the progress of a change in behavior, as before and after reactions are compared (Gary and Burk, 2014); *Well Formed Outcome* is a technique that explores the achievability and effect of a change in behavior; NLP teaches that we have differentiated beliefs and perceptions and therefore have internal conflicts. *Parts Integration* is the technique by which these internal conflicts are resolved, by identification of the separate parts in conflict and negotiation to a positive conclusion (Gary and Burk, 2014).

Study Design

The Role of Outcomes and Objectives in Design

It is necessary for instructional designers to plan a discussion with a measurable learning outcome in mind (Jackson, 2017). Outcomes are described as the overall purpose or goal from participation in an educational activity and overall, what the learners are supposed to know, or be able to do, as a result of course participation (Jackson, 2017). Design outcomes are used to structure the content of the learning activity, select and organize instructional activities and resources that facilitate effective learning, and provide a framework for devising ways to evaluate student learning (Morrison, Ross, Kalman, & Kemp, 2011a). Outcomes are used to organize specific topics or individual learning activities designed to help the learner achieve what is intended from the course, and they define the goals that are expected in an educational activity (Jackson, 2017). Outcomes address the educational needs (knowledge, skills, and/or practices) that contribute to the purpose of the any exchange of information, and they can be used to assess the overall impact of multiple objectives (Jackson, 2017). In order for a learning model to optimize learning outcomes, an instructor must be adept in first assessing the level of skill and prior knowledge of the learners (Eison, 2010). The instructor must also be able to provide assessments of progress in attaining learning outcomes during a program; to provide

timely and meaningful feedback to learners regarding both subject matter and the acquisition of learning skills; and to provide suggestions regarding the maintaining or improvement of the acquisition of material provided and learning skills (Eison, 2010).

Learning objectives are described as the primary building blocks of good curriculum design (Jackson, 2017). Objectives define outcomes to be achieved, by identifying skills, attitudes, content mastery and values and provide the framework by which learners can organize their own efforts to complete tasks assigned tasks (Jackson, 2017). Well-designed outcomes can form the basis by which instructional content, materials and techniques are selected and can provide the basis by which an assessment of accomplishment of the design is realized (Jackson, 2017).

The Role of Assessment in Design and Learning

In order for the design of an educational program or course to be successful, it must include methods for instructors to assess learning by students, and for program designers to assess instruction (Bryson, 2013). Presumably, the goal of any educational venue is to provide quality instruction for students, one in which they learn the content of the information provided, and become knowledgeable learners. It is, therefore, crucial to the success of the learners, of the course, and the program, to ascertain if instructors are competent in providing informational material and fostering a positive learning environment, that will enable students to learn and, if the program design is providing overall quality instructors and instruction (Bryson, 2013).

In order to accomplish this, the proper assessments must be used. Assessments employed in an educational setting must be able to accurately measure course retention, knowledge, and demonstration of course content, and possibly of the overall learning process as well (Reeves, 2006). As such, it is paramount that learning outcomes are clearly defined by the program

designers, and instructors, that students are made aware of learning goals, and the proper assessment strategies are developed, and implemented by designers, and instructors (Reeves, 2006). These methods must be valid, where they actually measure what they are intended to measure; and reliable, in that the accurate measure of learning outcomes can be duplicated across the educational spectrum (Reeves, 2006).

Conclusion

While this literature review has confirmed that there is certainly evidence and information on the topics contained herein which form the basis of this study, the review also suggests that more research is necessary to add to the depth of knowledge on the subjects examined (Clark, 2010). It is suggested here that a gap in research has been identified that would allow for examination of the thought processes inherent in criminal offenders who exhibit Criminal Thinking Errors (Clark, 2010). Previous research has established that a widely held theory attributes Criminal Thinking Errors as a cause of criminal behavior, and that these Thinking Errors exist in offenders with and without psychological disorders (Walters, 2002). Walters (2002) and other researchers have established that across almost all demographics, the identification of the thought processes leading to Criminal Thinking Errors and the criminal behavior that results, can be an effective way to gain insight into how and why criminals may develop (Smith, 2017). Information gathered in this study may prove valuable in additional research regarding the development and implementation of prison-based or other training/treatment programs that may lessen the likelihood of an inmate reoffending upon release and provide the basis for positive re-entry into the community (Smith, 2017).

This study will examine the thought processes in criminal offenders after a Criminal Thinking assessment and an interview with study participants. Concepts developed in NLP will

be considered during this study. Previous research has identified NLP as a viable method for identifying negative or maladaptive thought patterns and eliminating maladaptive behavior and to be a successful method for replacing those negative thoughts and behaviors with positive ones, which improves the likelihood of success thereafter (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985). Certainly, this warrants examination as a potential means for identifying thought patterns that lead to Criminal Thinking Errors and criminal behavior that results, in a population of criminal offenders participating in this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This Chapter will offer a description of the study design; the methods of data collection, analysis, and storage; and ethical concerns. The primary focus of the dissertation study will be to explore the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders after assessing Criminal Thinking via PICTS and through interviews with study participants.

Purpose of Study

This study will examine the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders after an Assessment to measure Criminal Thinking using the PICTS and via an interview.

The Criminal Thinking theory holds that criminal behavior can be attributed to maladaptive thought processes, referred to as Criminal Thinking Errors (Walter, 2003). These thought processing errors become cumulative over time, and lead to a 'criminal lifestyle, where criminal behavior becomes routine (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). Neurolinguistic Programing is characterized as the 'study of the structure of subjective experience' and uses techniques and methods to modify criminal thinking patterns (Kudliskis, 2013). This study will attempt to gain insight into the thought processes involved in Criminal Thinking by identifying those processes via an interview.

After assessing levels of present Criminal Thinking Errors in study participants using PICTS, researchers conduct an interview with the subjects. By conducting interviews with criminal offenders, researchers can explore the thought processes leading to the development of Criminal Thinking and the resulting criminal activity.

Research Questions

This proposed research study will explore the Criminal Thinking processes in criminal offenders after assessing Criminal Thinking via PICTS and through an interview with study participants. As such, the researcher will seek answers to the following questions:

-RQ1. Are criminal offenders aware that maladaptive patterns of thought known as Criminal Thinking Errors contribute to criminal behavior?

-RQ2. Are criminal offenders aware of the factors present that may influence the development of Criminal Thinking Errors?

Research Design and Methods

The proposed study will employ a qualitative study design, which will provide a way to explore Criminal Thinking thought processes leading to criminal activity in study participants (Griggs, 2014). According to Sullivan and Sargeant (2011) qualitative research has proven to be a valuable method in learning about the lived experiences of study participants, through background investigation, assessment and interviews. Prior research indicates that information regarding meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, thoughts, beliefs and attitudes associated with a particular set of behaviors under examination can be obtained through interaction and observation of study participants (Creswell, 2013). That information obtained can often be valuable in gaining insight into the underlying causes of the behavior(s) (Creswell, 2013).

This qualitative study will use a phenomenological method to investigate the subject matter. The purpose of conducting a qualitative research study is to gain an in-depth understanding of the behavioral phenomenon being studied and the reasons for the behavior from the perspective of those who have the lived experiences (Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011). In a study

using a phenomenological method, the perspectives, perceptions, feelings and understandings of the people who have had actual lived experiences of the situation being studied are the basis of the investigation (Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011). The subject is studied by examination of the conscious experiences of those who have lived the phenomenon (Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011). Data gathered in a phenomenological study is subjective, non-numerical data, consisting of the information provided by the research participants and the personal observations of the researcher (O'Connor & Gibson, 2001). As such, the research will seek to identify the patterns of thought involved in Criminal Thinking of the criminal offender research subjects through this process. Once these patterns of descriptive themes emerge, the researcher will interpret the findings and construct analytical themes to generate explanations or interpretive constructs (O'Connor & Gibson, 2001).

The participants in this study will be recruited from the general population, and limited to those individuals who speak English and self-report as being criminal offenders in the past. A chain-referral sampling or 'snowballing' technique can be employed to locate study participants.

Sources of Evidence and Data Collection Strategies

Data from this study will consist of the PICTS Assessment scores and information gained through semi-structured interviews of study participants. The interview of participants will be conducted individually for the purpose of gaining understanding of the thought processes involved in Criminal Thinking, in a location that will ensure confidentiality. The participants will be given the PICTS to assess Criminal Thinking Errors. Each study participant will then be interviewed to explore the Criminal Thinking thought processes. All phases will be conducted individually and study participants will have no contact with each other.

The questions asked by the researcher during the participant interviews are as follows:

1. How did you decide to participate in criminal activity?
2. Did your behavior escalate or become more frequent over time?
3. How much were you influenced by others prior to the commission of your criminal activity and how did they contribute to what you did?
4. What did you think about prior to the commission of your first criminal offense(s)?
5. How did you justify your behavior?
6. How did your thoughts after the criminal activity change from those you had prior to the criminal offense?
7. How did your thoughts regarding those or other criminal behaviors change over time (before and after)?
8. How much did you think about your criminal actions prior to your participation in any particular criminal act as time went on? Did your thoughts about committing crimes change?
9. How much did you think about how your criminal behavior affected other people (victims, friends and family, etc.) and how did that make you feel?

Should it be deemed necessary, follow-up questions may be asked for each of the nine primary questions. The interviews will be taped by the researcher and written notes will be made during the interview of each study participant. The transcript of the interview and the interviewer's notes of the interview and observations made will be used to develop a thematic analysis of the content of the data. Interviews will be conducted in person and at a location where the participant is comfortable and where confidentiality will be ensured.

Measures

The PICTS is an 80-item self-report measure designed to assess the 8 Criminal Thinking Styles believed to support a criminal lifestyle (Walters, 2012). These Criminal Thinking Styles are identified by Walters (2002) as: Mollification (Mo), Cutoff (Co), Entitlement (En), Power Orientation (Po), Sentimentality (Sn), Superoptimism (So), Cognitive Indolence (Ci), Discontinuity (Ds). The scale includes 8 items for each Thinking Style, and includes 16 additional items, dispersed over two validity scales identified as Confusion-revised, Defensiveness-revised and a Fear of Change (FOC) scale (Walters, 2012). Each item is rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale (*strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagree*), with *strongly agree* responses receiving four points, *agree* responses three points, *uncertain* responses two points, and *disagree* responses one point, except for the Defensiveness-revised scale where point values are reversed (*strongly agree* = 1 point, *agree* = 2 points, *uncertain* = 3 points, *disagree* = 4 points) (Walters, 2002). According to Walters (2012) the assessment features a measurable hierarchy, with General Criminal Thinking at the top, followed by 7 Thinking Styles (Mo, Co, En, Po, So, Ci, Ds), and with Proactive Criminal Thinking, Reactive Criminal Thinking at the bottom of the hierarchy (Walters, 2012).

The research conducted by Walters of 450 male and 227 female offenders using the PICTS, indicated that the PICTS thinking, validity, and content scales possess moderate to moderately high internal consistency and retest stability (Walters, 2002). The indications of the meta-analysis of research studies by Walters (2002) during which the PICTS was administered was that “besides correlating with measures of past criminality, several of the PICTS thinking and content scales are capable of predicting future adjustment/release outcome”, albeit at a low but statistically significant level (Walters, 2002). Additionally, the EN and CUR scales are

“sensitive to program assisted change” beyond what control subjects would spontaneously achieve (Walters, 2002). According to Walters (2002) the conclusion drawn from the aforementioned research is that test-retest reliability, internal consistency and temporal stability of the PICTS scales are “reasonably well established” (Walters, 2002).

A thematic analysis will be conducted by the researcher of the data collected during the interview of study participants, including interview transcripts, notes of interview and observational notes (Creswell, 2013). The analysis will serve to extract meaning from the data regarding the thought processes involved in Criminal Thinking (Creswell, 2013). A deductive approach to data collection and analysis will be used by the researcher, who will organize, code, categorize, interpret the data and then draw conclusions (Creswell, 2013).

Data will be organized by interview question and a pattern coding method will be used for locating and identifying basic concepts and ideas within the answers to those questions (Creswell, 2013). It is suggested in prior research that in order to integrate the entire venture, that it is the task to identify the recurring ideas, salient themes, patterns of belief and recurring language that link the subjects to the phenomenon (O’Connor & Gibson, 2001).

Possible Types and Sources of Data

Data will be collected from the general population and limited to those who have self-identified as former criminal offenders. A chain-referral sampling or ‘snowballing’ technique can be employed to locate study participants and participation will be voluntary. A comprehensive Informed Consent procedure will be implemented prior to the study, informing potential Study Participants about the nature of the study and of their participation.

Ethics in Research

Vulnerability of Participants

The study will draw on the general public and accept volunteers to participate if they have self-identified as criminal offenders. As these potential participants are not presently incarcerated, but have self-identified as having been criminal offenders in the past, they would not be considered a vulnerable population.

Informed Consent

Participants of the study proposed herein will be made aware and fully understand the nature of the study, the risks involved, and the potential benefits of participation so they can adequately make a decision on whether or not to participate (Creswell, 2009). There will be measures taken to ensure that all participants are made aware of informed consent in a language and manner understandable by the participants; that they fully understand the concepts; that their participation is voluntary; and that they can withdraw at any point without fear of consequence (Creswell, 2009). Procedures include an ongoing dialog of measures, ensuring the opportunity to ask questions (Creswell, 2009). A written study guideline form will be used explaining procedures, the voluntary nature of participation, roles and responsibilities of researchers and study participants and participants will have the opportunity to read and review it (Creswell, 2009). An appropriate Informed Consent form will be used to document the willingness of study participants to become involved in the study. All procedures will be fully explained prior to the beginning of the study (Creswell, 2009).

Confidentiality and Data Security

Researchers will follow strict guidelines to ensure that the identity of study participants is not revealed and that the privacy of participants is not compromised. Researchers will use a coded system of identifying participants and will not release or make public biographical or personal information or identifiers, that would allow for identification, to ensure secure

confidentiality and privacy (Creswell, 2009). All data collected will be in a secure location and only researchers will have access and destroyed when appropriate (Creswell, 2009). Security and protective measures be instituted in the accumulation and storage of biographical information and personal identification material; in the collection, analysis, and dissemination of written and recorded interview data; and of other materials relevant to the research study, so as to not cause harm to the study population (Gostin and Vanchieri, 2007).

Chapter 4

Results

This phenomenological qualitative study sought to examine the thought processes of six former criminal offenders who had previously served a sentence in a correctional facility and had been released. The purpose of conducting a qualitative research study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the thinking processes of people who had been incarcerated for criminal behavior. Criminal Thinking was the behavioral phenomenon being studied; the focus was on the reasons for the behavior from the perspective of those who have the lived experiences (Sullivan & Sargeant, 2011).

The research questions that were investigated in this study are as follows:

-RQ1. Are criminal offenders aware that maladaptive patterns of thought known as Criminal Thinking Errors contribute to criminal behavior?

-RQ2. Are criminal offenders aware of the factors present that may influence the development of Criminal Thinking Errors?

In this chapter, a summary of the results of the interviews with the former criminal offenders who participated in this study will be addressed. Chapter 4 will explain the methods of data collections and cover the logistics of the study and the demographics of the participants; data collection consisting of the assessment and interviews; the analysis and results; and the summary of the findings.

Analysis and Results

The goal of the research was to discover what insights that criminal offenders had relative to their criminal behavior. The data collected was coded to determine concepts, properties and patterns (Tech, 1990). The coding system consisted of both data reduction and complication, and enables the researcher to break down then reconstruct data to aid in analyzing the phenomenon to

locate patterns, similarities and differences along with overlying structures (Siedel and Kelle, 1995). Data reduction is the process by which data is simplified and categorized, where important elements are identified and indexed (Siedel and Kelle, 1995). Data complication is the process by which data is reconceptualized into identifying contexts (Siedel and Kelle, 1995). The relevant themes emerge from the contextualized data to provide an explanation of the phenomenon and its underlying processes (Tech, 1990). The themes are developed from the descriptions, ideas, statements and feelings of the research subjects provided in the interviews.

Prior to coding the texts of the interviews, the researcher scored the PICTS assessment to aid in his analysis of the interview data. The PICTS is designed to “assess the eight thinking styles hypothesized to support and maintain a criminal lifestyle” (Walters, p. 5 2013). However, since the PICTS assessment is very involved and shows a myriad of outcomes, and its purpose here is only as a guide to assess whether the offenders in the study did exhibit some degree of criminal thinking, it was determined that the most relevant portion of the assessment is the General Criminal Thinking Score (GCT). As such, only the GCT will be referenced.

According to Walters (2013) a score of 50 or higher on the GCT “indicates the presence of a belief system supportive of a criminal lifestyle” and that “the higher the individual scores relative to other offenders, the greater the criminal thinking” (Walters, 2013). A score below 50 on the GCT does not necessarily mean that the party does not have a criminal lifestyle, but generally the individual may have a criminal” belief system” that is hidden, weak, or absent (Walters, 2013).

In this study, all respondents attained a score above 50, with the highest raw score being 138 and the lowest 76. The participants scored as follows:

Participant	PICTS Score
#6	138
#5	112
#4	112
#3	79
#2	76
#1	98

All participants exhibited high enough scores to be considered having attributes of associated with an elevated criminal thinking style, and the elements of a ‘criminal lifestyle’, as defined by Walters (2013).

The themes that emerged from the coded data were the result of the analysis of the data collected from the participants and represent the interpretations of the researcher based on his training and experience. It is certainly not unreasonable to believe that other’s may interpret the data differently and draw different conclusions based on their training and experience.

The Superordinate themes that initially emerged from the data compiled and analyzed by the researcher are as follows: (a) awareness of criminal behavior, (b) purposefulness in the commission of crimes (c) increase in frequency and complexity of criminal behavior (d) lack of concern for others (victims, family, friends); (e) awareness of inevitable detection and negative outcome, (f) realization of impact of criminal behavior and remorsefulness. Each theme has components (Subordinate themes) defining the thought process of the underlying behavior. (a) Awareness of criminal behavior: knew behavior was illegal; conscious decisions to participate in criminal behavior; prior exposure to others committing crime. (b) Purposefulness in the commission of crimes: needed or wanted money; crimes funding a certain lifestyle; enjoyed the benefits of criminal actions. (c) Escalation of criminal behavior: increased in frequency of criminal behavior over time; increased success in ability to remain undetected; increased prowess

in commission of crimes; escalation of more elaborate behaviors over time; (d) Lack of concern for others: uncaring about victims or belief that crime was ‘victimless’, thoughtlessness for family interests. (e) Awareness of possible detection and outcome: awareness of inevitable detection, resignation of final outcome, downward spiral of emotions. (f) Realization of impact of criminal behavior and remorse: Sorrow, remorse, embarrassment, guilt.

As the Superordinate Themes and the Subordinate Theme components emerged from the data, the researcher became aware of the thought processes that were present in the research subjects relative to their criminal behavior.

The inductive coding system allowed the researcher to locate various themes within the data, as described in Table 1. It was necessary to make sub-categories with the theme to more accurately portray the experiences, thoughts and feelings of the study participants in relation to their criminal behavior.

The following table is the breakdown of those themes:

Table 1
Superordinate Themes and Components

Superordinate Theme	Subordinate Theme Components
Awareness of criminal behavior	knew behavior was illegal conscious decisions to participate in criminal behavior; prior exposure to others committing crime
Purposefulness in the Commission of crime	needed or wanted money crimes funding a certain lifestyle enjoyed the benefits of criminal actions
Escalation of criminal	increased frequency of criminal behavior

activity	increased success in ability to remain undetected increased prowess in commission of crimes escalation of more elaborate behaviors over time
Lack of concern for others	uncaring of victims or belief that crime was 'victimless' thoughtlessness for family interests
Awareness of inevitable detection and outcome	awareness of inevitable detection resignation of final outcome downward spiral of emotions
Realization of impact of criminal behavior and remorsefulness	sorrow remorse embarrassment guilt

During the interviews, the six study participants provided their personal experiences in engaging in criminal activity and the thoughts that preceded the behavior, during the behavior, and after the cessation of their criminal behavior.

The transcripts of the interviews were reviewed and the interviews revealed that each subject had been aware prior to the advent of their criminal activity that what they were about to engage in was illegal; that the behaviors and acts escalated over time in frequency; as each became more adept at their behavior, their chosen schemes became more elaborate; all talked of a 'lifestyle' that was as a result of the criminal activities, or enabled by the proceeds of crime; each expressed a realization that at some point they would not be able to continue; and each felt relief upon cessation of the criminal activity, as well as shame, guilt and embarrassment upon detection and prosecution.

Superordinate Theme 1: Awareness of Criminal Behavior

The Superordinate Theme 1 is based on the answers to research questions One and Three as follows: 1) How did you decide to participate in criminal activity? and 3) How much were you influenced by others prior to the commission of your criminal activity and how did they contribute to what you did? Subthemes emerged from the Themes and Table 2 is a breakdown of the subjects who reported the occurrence of the theme and subthemes:

Table 2
Awareness of Criminal Behavior

Theme	Number of Responding Participants
Superordinate Theme 1: Awareness of criminal behavior	6
Sub-Theme 1: knew behavior was illegal	6
Sub-Theme 2: conscious decisions to participate in criminal behavior;	6
Sub-Theme 3: prior exposure to others committing crime	5

The focus of Superordinate theme one was the realization that participation in criminal activity was a conscious effort, with a purpose in mind. All respondents indicated that they began their criminal activity purposefully and that their chosen criminal behavior was a necessary means to an end, although one did not view their activities as ‘criminal’. All respondents indicated that they knew their actions were illegal, but decided that in order to get what they wanted, that the crimes they committed were a necessity. Five of the participants indicated that they had been exposed to criminal behavior prior to their commission of the first criminal act,

however all indicated that they were influenced by others prior to their initial participation in crime.

Participant six stated: “I decided that to do the things I wanted to do.....buy me the things I wanted to buy.to gain favor with my peers.... I didn’t like being poor and unacceptable to my peers.... So...I gravitated toward those who were willing to do things to change their plight”. Participant one indicated that he did not like committing crime, but thought it was necessary to “get what he wanted”.

Participant five indicated that “The first thing that got me going was that I needed money... for drugs.” This participant indicated that they discovered an easy method to finance their drug habit and “didn’t think twice about it”. They indicated that stealing was a means to pay for their drug addiction, stating: “It was the drugs.....the drugs were everything”.

Participant four said that “ I done what I done so that I could live the lifestyle...that I was living....so I didn’t justify anything....but my thought process was that I’m going to have to do something if I’m going to keep doing...going out four nights a week...I’m going to have to do something to make some side money...you know ...do something...and it wasn’t working ...so...the alternative was...you know....to do whatever I needed to do...to support myself....support my habit...support myself and support the habit...”. The ‘something’ that participant four referenced was selling cocaine.

Participant three felt that his “...thirst for spending” was the motivating factor in the commission of crime. He indicated that there was an “.... endless supply of money once I started taking it.... “. He indicated that there was not much “consideration” given to what he was doing. Participant three said that the idea “... just popped into my headthat I could get extra money....and I’ll take it”.

Participant two was exposed to criminal activity from a young age and reports that as a child he witnessed “...uncles making fraudulent insurance claims and insurance scams.” He witnessed his mother purchasing items on credit cards and then “...filing insurance claims on her homeowners and say the items were stolen. Years later she would give me her credit cards....I would use them...then she would report them missing...”. As such Participant two revealed that when he was a little older someone “....brought it to my attention.....what we could do...and I said ‘I like that’.... ‘This is cool’....I liked the idea of making money and not working”.

Participant one said that he decided to become involved in criminal activity “...when I figured that the money I could make” He also said that he didn’t want to “use legit money”...money he made working...”to support (his) drug habit”; and that “the supply (of drugs) was there....or the demand was there...and I was able to supply what they demanded...”.

Superordinate Theme 2: Purposefulness in the commission of Crime

The Superordinate Theme 2 is based on the answers to research questions 1) How did you decide to participate in criminal activity, 2) Did your behavior escalate over time, 4) What did you think about prior to the commission of your first criminal offense, and 8) How much did you think about your criminal actions prior to your participation in any particular criminal act as time went on. All six of the participants the exhibited characteristics of the theme and indicated that their behavior was purposeful. Table 3 is a breakdown of the subjects who reported the occurrence of the behaviors in Theme 2 and it’s and subthemes:

Table 3

Purposefulness in the commission of Crime

Theme	Number of Responding Participants
Superordinate Theme 2: Purposefulness in the commission of Crime	6

Sub-Theme 1: needed or wanted money	6
Sub-Theme 2: enjoyed the benefits of criminal actions	6
Sub-Theme 3: crimes funding a certain lifestyle	6

The focus of Superordinate Theme 2 was the purposefulness exhibited by the participants regarding their criminal activities. All respondents explained that they committed crimes for a specific purpose which continued over time.

Participant six indicated that because he had been the subject of teasing and ridicule by peers that he "...figured I could do something about it.... It influenced me to do something drastic....I decided to try to do things that would buy me what I thought I needed and also to gain favor with my peers ... I didn't like being poor and unacceptable to my peers....I wanted a better life".

Participant five revealed that the "The first thing that got me going was that I needed money...for drugs". He indicated that it was his need "to get high" that precipitated his "stealing the money and that "All I cared about was the drugs". Participant five said that "...when I first started I was like....'ya know I can get like some money'" and that "I just wanted to get high". He said his sole purpose in stealing the money was to fund his drug habit.

Participant four, who did not initially view his behavior as 'criminal', indicated that he sold drugs to finance his "lifestyle", which consisted of "partying....hanging out four nights a week....drinking and drugging". Participant four said that he realized that in order to maintain his lifestyle, that he would need to supplement his income. He said, "I couldn't afford to go out and do that unless I did...that.... I done what I done so that I could live the lifestyle... if I'm going to keep doing...going out four nights a week...I'm going to have to do something to make some side money...you know ...do something...and it wasn't working ...so...the alternative

was...you know....to do whatever I needed to do...to support myself....support my habit...support myself and support the habit...". Participant felt he wasn't 'hurting anyone by selling drugs and indicated that he "never stole nothing" to get money for drugs or partying.

Participant three said that his "...thirst for spending..." precipitated him stealing money. He indicated that he "...needed money badly as the debt was choking me and I needed relief". Participant three indicated that, "...once a month I had to take a great deal... of money..." and that "... it migrated into a need for about 600 K a month to keep the Ponzi scheme going..." He also indicated that "It seemed easy to embezzle the money I needed, so I continued spending frivolously....".

Participant two indicated that because he had been exposed to criminal behavior as a child, that when he got older he".....took the ball and rolled with it....It was always pedal to the metal... let's push it as far as we can". He said that he had coaching but "eventually I figured out different things of my own...and then he "....knew how to take it to a whole new level".

Participant one indicated that he needed to find an alternative source of income to support his drug habit. He said that "I didn't want to spend the money that I actually worked for and take it away from my family...so I figured it was easier to sell and then provide free drugs to myself that way...while also making money....". Although later he indicated that he had actually become involved in selling drugs prior to developing his habit.

Superordinate Theme 3: Escalation of Criminal Activity

Superordinate Theme 3 is based on the answers to research question 2: How did your behavior become more frequent or escalate over time? Research question 4: What were your thought processes before you became involved in your first criminal offenses? Question 5: How did you justify your behavior? All six study participants reported behavior used to construct Theme 3 and its subthemes.

Table 4*Escalation of criminal activity*

Theme	Number of Responding Participants
Superordinate Theme 3: Escalation of criminal activity	6
Sub-Theme 1: increased frequency of criminal behavior over time	6
Sub-Theme 2: increased success in ability to remain undetected	6
Sub-Theme 3: increased prowess in commission of crimes	6
Sub-Theme 4: escalation of criminal behaviors over time	6

In Superordinate Theme 3, participants reported that their criminal behavior escalated in frequency and complexity over time, as they became more efficient and effective at their given activities. Participant six indicated that his criminal activities “..escalated when I had my youngest daughter...I had her at 15 years old...I figured since I was doing this and I was making a little bit of money I might as well go the way in...really really invest my energy and try to make a living...for me and my now family...and that’s how it escalated...”. He also stated that “Once I started selling drugs...I fell into that culture...”. While participant six indicated several times that he did not like living a life of crime, he saw it as a means to an end. He thought that he was ‘different from the other criminals that he knew, that he was a “decent guy”’.

Participant five said that as his addiction to cocaine grew, so did the extent of his criminal activity: “I’d say a period of two and a half to three years...it kept getting worse...it kept getting worse...at first it was just a little bit...and then more and more....I kept getting higher and higher...more and more addicted...I kept taking more and more money...it kept growing....”.

This respondent said that he didn't care about anything except "getting high", and took as much money as he needed.

Participant four indicated that the increase in his 'lifestyle' activity was as a result of his environment and the people he chose to associate with: "The more you were out...the more you went out...the more people that wanted to go out... the more you drank...the more you partied.....less work... ..you know...some things we did without because you know I chose to go hang out four nights a week...drinking in a bar.....I couldn't afford to go out and do that unless I did...do that... it was like ...hell...I can go buy...go buy four eight balls...and sell two of them...and get two for myself...for the same price...so.....I didn't have to spend any of my money...I'm saying that's what it was like..... so....I don't know...like to begin with...it was just sporadic...we didn't do very much...it was like every two or three weeks....or every two weeks...or something or other...but then it got to where it was normal...a normal part of my life...to begin with...we were out same nights every week...but then it changed...it got more and more frequent...".

Participant Three, who had been not been exposed to a criminal lifestyle prior, felt he was compelled to become more elaborate in his schemes as his debts grew. He stated, "...When I got away with it once and it seemed so easy...I just continued I just continued to do it..... It became a once a month thing...for sure...that was really the pattern...once a month I had to take a great deal...of money" He also said that the schemes became more elaborate, "... it started off with getting the proceeds from a car and not turning it in... and then you know...pretending the guy had trouble paying...and all kinds of things....then it migrated into a need for about 600 K a month to keep the Ponzi scheme going...".

Participant two, who reportedly came from a family who routinely engaged in criminal behavior while he was growing up, indicated that his activity became more sophisticated and more frequent as well. When asked if his behavior escalated he responded, “No...it was just not...it was just “Let’s Go”..... There was no line...where we said ‘I’m not going to do this...this is where I’m going to stop’...and then slowly it grew...It was just always pedal to the metal ...and let’s push it as far as we can....” And “I figured out different things on my own...and then knew how to take it to a whole new level...” of sophistication. He reported that “...it just progressively got worse.....Just wanting to do more and more...more and more...not concerned with the consequences”.

When asked if his criminal behavior escalated over time, Participant one responded: “.....It escalated as.....you know....like never enough...you just want to do more and more...the more you got away with something the more you wanted to do it....if you thought you could get away with it a little bit....why not try a little bit more...so...that’s how it escalated... turning from big a little man into a big man...”.

Superordinate Theme 4: Lack of Concern for Others

Superordinate Theme 4 emerged from the analysis of the answers to research questions nine: How much did you think about how your criminal behavior affected other people? Four of the six study participants exhibited this thought process and showed lack of caring or understanding of how their behavior affected other people.

Table 5

Lack of concern for others

Theme	Number of Responding Participants
Superordinate Theme 4:	4

Lack of concern for others

Sub-Theme 1: uncaring of victims or belief that crime was
'victimless' 4

Sub-Theme 2: thoughtlessness for family interests 4

Superordinate Theme five, four respondents showed a wanton disregard for the feelings of family members or the impact their behavior had or would have. They all exhibited behavior that indicated that they cared only for their own wants and needs and had little regard for anyone else. While Participant six and Participant one indicated that, while in the midst of their criminal behavior they did have more than a passing regard of the people they interacted with or for their families, the rest had little or no regard at all. Participant six felt that he acted differently toward the people he sold drugs to than did other 'drug dealers'. He said that he "...actually loved his customers...." That he wasn't into "harming them" if they owed him money and that he actually felt that he was a "protector" of his customers where he would watch out for their interests. He said, "I dealt business through my heart...I didn't want to hurt them or nothing like that...". He also indicated that he was different from other drug dealers, "...I used to protect the people I was dealing with... my customers.... my clients and stuff like that...I used to... to justify it as if I was their protector...because I've seen so much wrong done...while doing it right...I've seen people get hurt over 20 bucks...I'd seen this type of stuff and that type of stuff... a whole bunch of negative stuff...and I would never do that,.....I'd always be the bigger person...you owed me some money...I would forgive you....you know...that's just the way that I did it... ". He also showed understanding for the feelings of his family and how his behavior affected them. He stated that: "..... (It) broke up my relationship with my grandma and grandpa...To me they were perfect and once I became tarnished, I became ashamed to go around them... I brought a lot

of negativity and a lot of negative energy to the house even though I wasn't a bad person...it's just that people want to follow you to buy drugs off of you....and cops want to chase you...and you run to the house and all type of stuff like that...and my little brothers... I never had them acting in my life style....our relationship was strained because I was in the streets and I didn't want them to be out there so we were never that close...". Participant one indicated that he did his best to ensure that his activities remained undetected by his family. He stated, "So...most of the close people around me didn't really know what I was doing...". He also indicated that if the family of a customer expressed displeasure with them buying drugs from him, that he would stop selling out of concern for them: "Oh...100%....to be honest with you...If I was selling to someone whether it be a male or a woman and they had a spouse and that spouse said one thing to me that was negative about the other spouse using...that was it...".

In contrast, the other four participants all had little or no regard for either victims of family members. Participant five believed that he had been "an asshole" but didn't care. He felt that he was "king of the world" and that his "ego was way out of proportion from where it should have been.... So...I thought my will...I could do whatever...I thought I was above it...". Participant Five believes that his addiction fueled his criminal activity and said "...I was just a junkie dude...I went from an asshole to a junkie...a criminal... ..it was just take...I didn't look out for anybody else...not even my family...friends...peers...anybody...it was just....what can I get...". Participant five said that, because of his cocaine addiction that he "...couldn't have cared less who I hurt....it didn't matter if they were victims, family or friends". He said, "So...prior to me getting into drugs ...and taking the money...that was so intertwined with me....I was thinking that...man you know...I was king of the world...you know ...I thought I could do whatever I want... I was selfish...didn't give a f#@k...you know...didn't think about 'this is

illegal’...didn’t think ‘now I have kids’...’I have a wife...responsibilities’...I didn’t think of any of that...man I was just thinking about what I wanted...”. Participant five said that he used his addiction as “an excuse” to commit crimes and that he “...didn’t think of the consequences for me or anyone else close to me”.

Participant four said that he had to do certain things in order to live the lifestyle he chose, regardless of how it affected anyone else. He said, “I didn’t realize how much it affected my family.....until I got in trouble...and then it made me realize how hard it must have been to watchyou know...people ain’t stupid...if you’re going out....four nights a week...you’re doing something...you know...but I didn’t care about that...I was doing it...I didn’t consider that I was hurting anybody...but after getting in trouble...and after having the time to think about it...shit...I missed out on a lot of things...you know...shit I should have done...and got to be where I felt like people was disappointed...there was certain people who didn’t like to be around me....because they didn’t know what was going to happen...”.

Participant three said that he “...never stopped to think of the impact I would have upon my family and friends”...He said that he “... never thought it affected anybody...It’s my problem...being without a doubt a serial narcissist...I never really paid much attention to how it affected other peopleeven when my mother died...when I was in Cumberland (Federal Correctional Facility)....I never really processed her death....” He went on to say that he was living an extravagant lifestyle and that he “....fucked a lot of people without ever accepting the fact that I was...not to mention my wife....My only regard was, ‘Hey...how do you get the next dollar to pay this Ponzi scheme forward’...”

Participant two had been exposed to criminal activity from an early age. His immediate family was engaged in criminal activity while he was growing up and therefore, he had no

realization that as he got older his actions would affect his wife and child. He said that he was “never a good kid” while he was growing up and that continued into adulthood. He said “I was just not a nice person” and that it “got progressively worse”. He said that he “wanted what he wanted at any cost”. He felt that “ Because my victims were faceless because they were corporations...you really can’t see who you’re hurting...but obviously when you go back and think about it...there are people because companies lose money and what do they do?...they lay off people...you just don’t get to see who your victim is ever...”. When asked about how he thought his behavior affected family and friends, his response was: “ I didn’t care...and here’s why I didn’t care...I didn’t care about them because I didn’t even care about myself....If I cared about me...I’d have never put myself in harm’s way...so...it was impossible to care about someone else...”.

Superordinate Theme five was focused on the blending of the thought processes of respondent’s realization of their inevitable detection and/or of their desire to cease their criminal behaviors. The Theme emerged from the answers to research questions 4, What did you think about prior to the commission of your first criminal offenses? 5, How did you justify your behavior, and 6, How did your thoughts change about yourself after you became a drug dealer...after you become involved in criminal activity verses how you felt about yourself before?

Superordinate Theme 5: Awareness of Inevitable Detection and Outcome

Four Participants exhibited the thought processes present in Superordinate Theme five at some point prior to detection by law enforcement, while the others did not indicate that they had any such thoughts. This theme resulted from analysis of the answers to interview question 7: How did your thoughts regarding those or other criminal behaviors change over time (before and

after) and interview question 8: How much did you think about your criminal actions prior to your participation in any particular criminal act as time went on? Did your thoughts about committing crimes change?

Table 6

Awareness of inevitable detection and outcome

Theme	Number of Responding Participants
Superordinate Theme 5: Awareness of inevitable detection and outcome	4
Sub-Theme 1: awareness of inevitable detection	3
Sub-Theme 2: resignation of final outcome	4
Sub-Theme 3: downward spiral of emotions	4

Four Participants exhibited the thought processes present in Superordinate Theme five at some point prior to detection by law enforcement, while the others did not indicate that they had any such thoughts. Participant six showed great concern about what his criminal behavior entailed, as he indicated that he did not view himself ‘like the other(s)’ criminals. While he had made the decision to sell drugs to extricate himself from an economic plight that he described as ‘less fortunate’ than most of his peers, it wasn’t something that he either liked nor embraced. Consequently, as time passed, he became more and more distraught over his ‘drug dealer’ lifestyle. He said, “ I never thought for a second that I become a drug dealer...a weed smoker...a beer drinker...I never thought that for a second...It was never something I wanted to do...I just kinda like... once I got into drugs...Once I started selling drugs...I fell into that culture...”. His insights were unique in how he described himself as being different from his

peers: “Ya...it’s kinda like the wolf in sheep’s clothing...only vice versa...I was a sheep in wolves clothing...I had to become what they were in order to defend myself in order to not be targeted...in order not to be looked at as weak...”. He expressed sorrow that over time, others seemed disappointed that he had become a drug dealer. He said,” ...but a few guys would come to me and tell me how...you know... they can’t believe this is who I’d become instead of something else...” And, “They called me ‘Scooter’ at the time...’man Scooter...I can’t believe that you’re out here...If anyone could have made it out of here it could have been you”.

Toward the end of his career as a drug dealer, Participant six remembered feeling like he had had enough and wanted to get out of the ‘lifestyle’. He said, “So...I actually used to beg a lot of my clients to stop...so I could stop...literally I used to beg them to stop so I could stop...because I didn’t want to do it any more...It wasn’t me...it wasn’t something I ever wanted to do anyway... I actually wanted ...I would rather had died than continued the life I used to live as a drug dealer.....it was about 13 years of that activity...drugs and crime...them years...right there...they were the worst years of my life...I hated myself... I always said that the only time I found any comfort in in was when I was drunk or high...I could numb the pain... but whenever I was sober I cried a lot...I went to church and all that... ..I used to ask God before I understood God like I understand him now...I used to ask God to do something miraculous...and take me.....and do something to change me.....and give me a better opportunityI just didn’t know he was listening...and allow me to go to prison...”.

Participant five said that at some point he realized that he “...went to the bottom of the barrel...I was just a junkie dude...I went from an asshole to a junkie...a criminal...” He went on to say that he felt relief when he was caught and that it was “a blessing in disguise”. He said,

”...so ya when it first started I was like....’ya you know I can like get some money...the thing is I could have always gone to the bank and get a loan at any time....and probably put it back before anybody would have noticed...but I was always so fucking high...I never did it...how fucked up is that...??...ya...I’ll just get a bank loan...I could have...but I never did it...I was too busy ...I was like.....I’ll do it later...”. He went on to say that he felt relief when he was caught and that it was “a blessing in disguise” as it forced him to get sober.

Participant three indicated that as his criminal scheme escalated beyond the point where he could control it, he realized he would ‘get caught’. He said, “I had complete awareness as the thing continued to spiral....into millions of dollars...I had no way out...and I used to remark to my brother-in-law who was a cop He used to come over with his wife and kids every Friday night and I started a pattern probably sometime early 2000 ...maybe it was a little later...maybe 2003 or 2004 before I was convicted in 2009...I used to say to him on pizza nightenjoy the pizza and the cocktails because I’m not going to be here that long...”Ahhhh...what’s wrong”.....And I’d say “I’m going to end up in Federal Prison... “and he would say “what are you talking about”...and I’d say..”I can’t get into it but there is a lot of stuff at work....and it isn’t going the way it should be going...and I made some moves I shouldn’t have made...”...I had a unique awareness by the mid 2000’s.. I knew that I was not going to be able to repay anything...”. Participant three pointed out that “... another thing with a thief is that if he knows he’s going to go down...you know...”, consequently he reported that he “....was just going crazy because my mind graduated to the fact that I was not going to escape this...my spending...rather than ratcheting back became more offensive...and in my heart I knew that there was no way out.....in the beginning I always felt that I can pay this back...it was only 400k ...I can pay it back....but when I got into the millions...there was no way to pay it back...”. Participant three

reported that the end "... was welcomed...it was very....very...uh...I can't say I was happy to get caught...but I had already accepted that that was going to happen...years before.....so when it happened it happened....".

As Participant two reported that he had been exposed to crime and criminal activity from a young age, he had no compunction about his own criminality. However, he did report that at some point he realized he would get caught. He said that while he had "...got a little better with time.....got better at it.... at the tail end...the past few years it got a little more sloppy.....when you know what the end result is going to be...you stop....at least I did...you stop really caring whether you get caught or you don't get caught...". When asked if the realization that he would inevitably get caught changed his thought processes and criminal behavior he said that he "Didn't care...in 2002 my co-defendant said 'you know.....we are going to go to jail over this'.... and I said 'Ya I know'...we just didn't know when....". Participant two told me that he "...always knew what he was doing was wrong but did it anyway. I wanted what I wanted and even knowing that I was eventually going to be caught did not matter".

Superordinate Theme 6: Realization of Impact of Criminal Behavior and Remorse

Superordinate Theme six is based on the answers to research questions 6, How did your thoughts after the criminal activity change from those you had prior to the criminal offenses? Question 7, How did your thoughts regarding those or other criminal activity change from those you had prior to the criminal offenses? And Question 9, How did you think about how your criminal behavior affected other people.....victims first...family...friends...? The Theme focuses on the thoughts of the respondents after they were arrested and prosecuted for the crimes they committed.

Table 7

Realization of Impact of Criminal Behavior and Remorse

Theme	Number of Responding Participants
Superordinate Theme 5:	
Realization of Impact of Criminal Behavior and Remorse	6
Sub-Theme 1: Sorrow	5
Sub-Theme 2: remorse	5
Sub-Theme 3: embarrassment	
Sub-Theme 4: Guilt	5

All six study participants exhibited the thought processes that are present in Superordinate theme 6. It was apparent from the interviews that all the respondents came to realize the impact of their criminality on family and/or friends, however not all the respondents said that they felt remorse for ‘victims’. It appears that the three study participants who were involved in the distribution of illegal drugs viewed their crimes as ‘victimless’ and did not show remorse for those to whom they supplied the drugs.

Participant six had previously reported that he did not like ‘being a criminal’ but saw drug dealing as a means to a better life. This respondent said that his thoughts were “messed up because I believed in God and knew that I was going to be punished one day by God” He said that while crime became a way of life, he tried to do less serious crimes “...so that my punishment wouldn’t be so severe when God says it is time to pay for your sins”. He said that he “started looking for a change”, but “didn’t know where to start. He reported that he”...actually wanted ...I would rather had died than continued the life I used to live as a drug dealer...”. While he asked God to “...do something miraculous and change and take me and give me a

better opportunity”, he didn’t think God would “allow me to go to prison”. Participant six also reported that he believed in selling drugs he “wasn’t hurting anybody, it’s totally their choice”.

Participant five felt that “...being incarcerated was a blessing in disguise.....”. That as a result of “getting sober” he “got some clarity, the feelings of hurting other people were overwhelming, . . .I didn’t know if I would be able to deal with it, and keep living”. He also said that “Afterwards, going to rehabs, 12 step programs and incarceration I had tremendous shame about what I had done. It took a couple of hard years to get past that and move on...”. He feels he is a better husband and father now and that if he can remain sober, and he will remain a productive member of society.

Participant four had previously indicated that his lifestyle, including his criminal activities became “second nature” and he had not thought about the consequences prior to getting caught. However, he became aware after his arrest, the consequences of his lifestyle. He said, ”.... I didn’t realize how much it affected my family.....until I got in trouble...and then it made me realize how hard it must have been to watchyou know...people ain’t stupid... I didn’t consider that I was hurting anybody...but after getting in trouble...and after having the time to think about it...shit...I missed out on a lot of things...you know...shit I should have done...and got to be where I felt like people was disappointed...Participant four said that after he was caught that he “...was glad it was over. The lifestyle I was living was gone. All the drama it caused in my life was gone”. When asked about his thoughts regarding the affect his behavior had on others, he said, “I thought about it a lot. It was very upsetting to me. I put a lot of stress on my family. I have tried to not let it bother me, all the time away from my family...my mom died and friends... I will never get that time back. I do better as time goes on. It doesn’t bother me as much as it used to. I have accepted it”.

Participant three had indicated that he had committed crimes to support a lavish lifestyle and didn't care about the consequences until much later. He described himself as a "serial narcissist" and "never really paid much attention to how it affected other peopleeven when my mother died...I never really processed her death.... you know until I got out.....then I started to think about how I let her down....and then how I let my sister down...and how my brother had a car repossessed out of his driveway...that I was making the payments on for him...through the money I got that I shouldn't have got...and I started to see those financial impacts...the death of my mother and all ...my sister got dragged into this thing because the plaintiff went after her...". When asked about the change in his thought processes after his arrest Participant three reported that getting caught ".....changed everything.... My thought process changed completely...I accepted what I did...I asked for forgiveness every day...when I make a prayer I ask for forgiveness for all the people that I hurt during my...that I let down...people who worked for me...you know...when I went down they all got hurt...the company got hurt badlyI certainly take responsibility although I never liked that line...it doesn't mean shit...but...I realized that it was a bad thing...really bad...and I can't still quite process it...because if I try to process that whole thing I'd become overwhelmed with guilty feelings". This respondent talked about living a "24/7 nightmare"and wished for a "worry free life". He reported that he "prayed for winning the lottery to lift the burden of the crime and guilt". And that over time, his "...thoughts changed in that I was tormented by the entire crime and the pending fallout for me as well as my family and friends.....that is still an issue today".

Study Participant two had stated that he was not a "good person", and consequently he "didn't care" that what he was doing was wrong nor did he consider the consequences. However, after realizing the affects of his criminal actions on his family, he stated that "In this point ...

there is guilt that that I will now carry for the rest of my life.... For me the best thing that ever happened was going to prison. It was the only thing that put life in perspective, unfortunately the price was high for others in my life, but that is what I get for never caring about them to begin with”.

Summary

The findings of this phenomenological research study were presented in Chapter four. The approach taken allowed the researcher to explore the thought processes of individuals who engaged in various criminal behaviors as a method of explanation of the behavior. The reports of the lived experiences recounted by the participants in answering the research questions provided the researcher with enough information to develop themes relevant to criminal thought processes and the associated behaviors. Explanations of the thought processes leading to, or involved in, the decisions leading to criminal behavior by each individual were analyzed by the researcher. As a result of this study, there was the identification of six Superordinate Themes and associated Sub-Themes for each.

The researcher provided excerpts from the interviews in Chapter 4 on which the six Superordinate Themes and the Sub-Themes for each. The Superordinate Themes are identified as follows: (a) awareness of criminal behavior, (b) purposefulness in the commission of crimes (c) increase in frequency and complexity of criminal behavior (d) lack of concern for others (victims, family, friends); (e) awareness of inevitable detection and negative outcome, (f) realization of impact of criminal behavior and remorsefulness.

The recitation of the lived experiences consisting of criminal behavior, along with the awareness of underlying thought processes of the research study participants, allowed the

researcher to explore the extent of each participant's realizations of their thoughts as they became involved in criminal behavior.

Chapter 5

Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The research literature on criminal offenders postulates a number of different reasons for criminal behavior. Yochelson and Samenow discussed maladaptive patterns of thought that *contribute* to criminal behavior; and that criminals are aware of the factors present that may *influence* the development of criminal thinking (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976). Chapter 5 contains an in-depth analysis and explanation of the data obtained in this study, consisting of the recitation of the lived experiences of criminal offenders through interviews Chapter 5 consists of the following sections: (a) chapter introduction, (b) interpretations of findings, (c) limitations of the study, (d) recommendations, (e) implications, and (f) the conclusion of the study.

Introduction

This study was based on the premise that an important factor in criminal behavior is Criminal Thinking, as defined by Yochelson and Samenow and refined by Glen Walters (Yochelson and Samenow, 1976); Walters, 2001). The study sought to investigate whether criminals are aware of their thought patterns during the time they engaged in criminal behavior, and the influence their thinking patterns may have on criminal behavior.

The PICTS was administered in order establish if Criminal Thinking was apparent in each of the study participants. As a method of determining Criminal Thinking, the researcher administered the PICTS assessment which measures Criminal Thinking Errors. The researcher found that all six respondents showed elevated raw scores in General Criminal Thinking, evidencing that all had an elevated presence of the Criminal Thinking thought processes. The General Criminal Thinking category score of the PICTS is the sum of scores from several sub-categories of Criminal Thinking Errors. These sub-categories include: Mollification- a tendency to rationalize and to deny harm to others; to divert blame by questioning the motives of others;

Cutoff- the career criminal quickly stops evaluating the outcome of his behavior; Entitlement- The right to do whatever one wants; Power Orientation- the view that others or situations are either strong or weak, where the weak are exploited; Sentimentality- the concept that good deeds will counteract criminal behaviors; Super Optimism- an overestimation of ability, and the notion of invincibility; Cognitive indolence- laziness, taking the path of least resistance; and Discontinuity-lack of self-discipline (Walters, 2003). The PICTS was solely used to determine if each participant did display significant criminal thinking tendencies.

Based on the findings of this study, it is apparent that at least the participants in this study were aware of their thought processes and how those thought processes led to criminal behavior. Based on the themes that emerged through the interviews and the scores on the PICTS assessment which indicated elevated levels of Criminal Thinking with this group, it appears that this group of former criminals were fully aware that their actions were related to their criminal behavior, and that their behavior was based on specific thought patterns. However, it does not seem likely that this group of respondents, who were *generally* aware that they had criminal thought patterns leading to criminal behavior, were aware of the specific Criminal Thinking Patterns as described by Walters (2001) in his construction of the PICTS Assessment or in the research conducted by Yochelson and Samenow (1976).

Interpretations of Findings

This study consisted of interviews with six former criminal offenders and their responses to the PICTS. The results of the PICTS indicated that all the participants did endorse criminal thinking patterns. This study also yielded six Superordinate Themes, each with several Sub-Themes. The Themes represent the elements that were present in the lived experiences of the study participants and show the patterns of thoughts and behaviors exhibited by the respondents

during the time when they were engaged in criminal activity. The behaviors exhibited in each theme will be explained in this chapter.

Theme 1: Awareness of Criminal Behavior

The results of this study suggest that the former criminal offenders had full knowledge and awareness that they would be engaging in criminal activity prior to the commission of their first offenses and did so for a specific purpose. The presence of the elements of Theme 1 and its Sub-Themes in study participants indicates that an awareness of the thought processes were present, and that those thought processes used were deliberative, prior to the commission of their first offenses. These thought process carried over to other offenses that were committed over time, suggesting the awareness of those thought processes continued.

Theme one suggests that these individual's thought carefully about what and how to engage in criminal activity. The data also suggests that while the opportunity to engage in criminal activity presented itself in different ways for each individual, each made the conscious decision to engage in criminal activities for a specific purpose. All respondents deliberated prior to the commission of their first criminal actions, regardless of age, and thought about the manner in which they would be most effective in the commission of their crimes. re

Theme 2: Purposefulness

The information gathered resulted in Theme two and its Sub-Themes. Theme 2, indicates that respondents showed a purposefulness in the commission of their crimes. While fact patterns differed, and the modes and manners of commission of offenses were varied among the criminal offenders, the patterns of thought present during the commission of each crime were similar. Each of the six participants indicated that they committed crimes for a specific purpose. Prior to the commission of their first crimes and over time as their criminal behavior continued, the

evidence indicated similarities in study participants in the desire to achieve an ‘end’ by the commission of crime.

Study participants all indicated that their criminality was based on the desire to obtain more money than they had, or would be able to have, if left to legitimate means. They indicated that through deliberative thought processes, they concocted means of ‘making money’ through illegal and illegitimate means, hence the involvement in criminal behavior. Based on the respondents interviews it is not unreasonable to believe that they were well aware of the thought processes involved in the deliberations to commit crime to attain their desired ‘end’. It is also likely that their criminal thinking patterns resulted in their ability to formulate methods used in the commission of crimes and the underlying desire to obtain the funds necessary to live a certain lifestyle, or purchase the things they desired. The purposefulness that each showed and were able to articulate in their interviews about their decisions to steal money, sell drugs, and participate in other criminal behavior indicated that the former offenders were aware of the thought processes involved in the decision to commit crime and the methods and modes of their criminality.

Theme Three: Escalation of Criminal Behavior

Theme Three and its Sub-Themes are important in establishing that these criminal offenders were aware of the thought processes used in the commission of crime, as the decisions each made over time lead directly to the escalation of their crime of choice and in the construction of more elaborate schemes, as well as more effective and efficient methods of operation. Based on the interviews with respondents, it appeared that criminal activity escalated over time for each of the respondents, regardless of the methods used, as they became more proficient at their trade.

The cycle of escalation was similar in each case. All reported that the more each obtained, the more each wanted; the more they ‘got away’ with their chosen crime, the more emboldened they

became; the greater the prowess in commission of crime, the more elaborate the schemes or the more frequent the behavior; the more involved in the ‘lifestyle’ each led, and the greater the need for resources to fund the lifestyle. Over time, the *want* became the *need*. It is therefore reasonable to believe that in order to make conscious decisions to commit more elaborate crimes, to engage in criminal activity at a greater frequency, and to live a lifestyle dependent on the commission of crime, that the criminal offender would be cognizant of the underlying thought processes involved in the planning and the commission of the crimes.

Theme 4: Lack of Concern for Others

In Theme four and its Sub-Themes, study participants indicated that they had little or no concern for others during the time period when they were involved in criminal activity. While this was not the case for all the respondents, it is not unreasonable to believe that the thought processes allowing each to ignore the effects of their behavior regarding family, friends and even victims, was known to the former criminal offenders. Those who verbalized this indicated that their wanton disregard of the feelings of others was a conscious decision to put their own wants, desires and ‘needs’ ahead of others, regardless of consequences. While not all reported these feelings verbally in their interviews, their continued criminal behavior over time demonstrated a lack of concern for the welfare of their families, and a carelessness in regards to the possible effects. While not all indicated that others were victimized by their crimes, those who did expressed no concern how their behavior affected those victims while they were in the midst of their criminal activities.

Based on the evidence of the presence of this disregard of the effect of their behavior on others, it is reasonable to believe that each of these former offenders was cognizant of their own patterns of thought regarding this phenomenon. There are indications that while in the midst of

their criminal lifestyle, these individuals certainly recognized that their behaviors were criminal in nature, and that being criminal offenses, there were potentially legal consequences. There is also evidence to show that they deliberately disregarded the effects on families and victims. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that these former offenders were well aware of these thought processes and that they made conscious efforts in their pursuits, despite the possible consequences.

Theme 5: Awareness of Possible Detection and Outcome

The presence of an ‘awareness’ of the inevitable detection and outcome of criminal behavior as evidenced in study participants, forms the basis of Theme five and its Sub-Themes. There were indications that respondents knew that their criminal behavior would inevitably be detected, or that they could not sustain their lifestyle without a negative outcome. There were reports that when they realized that they could not sustain or maintain their lifestyle, or the commission of criminal activity without detection, they actually made conscious efforts to increase, not decrease criminal activity. The study participants who articulated that the elements of Theme five and its Sub-Themes were present at some point during their criminal activity, also maintained that when they became aware that their crimes would be detected and that they would face legal consequences, they became emotionally depressed, indicated by feelings of sadness, frustration and hopelessness, born out by their actions if not their words.

It is therefore, not unreasonable to believe that given the reports from study participants of how they felt, and what they did, during these periods in each one of their lives, that they were certainly aware of the thought processes underlying their behaviors. As each of these participants became aware that their lifestyle could not be sustained, they exhibited similar behaviors or articulated similar thoughts, feelings and emotions. There were reports that some ramped up their

activities, while others struggled to maintain the lifestyle despite their emotional distress, and all showed an awareness of the thought processes underlying their behaviors at the time, either through acknowledgment during their interview, or through recitation of their actions and behavior.

Theme 6: Realization of Impact of Criminal Behavior and Remorse

The Basis of Theme six and its Sub-Themes is the realization of the impact that the criminal activities that the former criminal offenders had engaged in had on others, and the remorse felt by these former criminal offenders thereafter. Study participants indicated that upon detection, arrest and/or indictment by legal authorities, or during or after incarceration, each became aware of the impact of their criminal behaviors on family, friends and victims. While each may have come to the realization at different points in their lives, as each situation was unique, all indicated similar feelings and emotions, including guilt, embarrassment and sorrow.

As each study participant eventually realized that their behaviors had deleterious effects on their families, emotions were triggered in each. Each described similar feelings upon this realization. All but one study participant reported that during their involvement in committing crimes they ‘didn’t care’ about effects on others. However, upon being arrested, charged criminally, or during or after incarceration, the actualization of the effects on others caused great emotional distress. As such, it is not unreasonable to believe that each former criminal offender had an awareness of their thought processes underlying their behaviors and actions following detection of their criminal activity by authorities. Also, there was no indication that these aforementioned emotions were as a result of being *caught*, engaging in committing crimes, but because they had been *involved* in committing crimes. This phenomenon seems to underscore the theory here, that these former criminal offenders were aware of the thought processes involved in

the realization of negative effects and the consequences, at a point in their lives, which determined their behavior thereafter.

Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate if criminal offenders were aware of the thought processes involved in the decisions to commit crimes and in committing those crimes. The data collected in this study was the result of interviews conducted with participants who had a history of criminal behavior and had been incarcerated for their criminal behavior. The results of the study and the conclusions drawn by the researcher were based on the recitation of the lived experiences of those study.

Limitation 1. The study participants were asked to answer questions honestly, and there is no indication that they did not. However, people are often untruthful regarding their behavior. Many may be on hiding the extent of their criminality, while others may try to enhance their criminal prowess by exaggerating their crimes.(Creswell, 2013). Therefore, it is possible that some participants did not answer questions truthfully, or that all questions were answered truthfully.

Limitation 2. The study here sought information from former criminal offenders, however this is a small sample and may not represent all criminals or their thinking patterns. There are various forms of criminality, illegal behavior, and deviant behavior deemed criminal. The law deems that there are 'levels' of crime and criminals, based on seriousness, repetition and frequency of criminal behavior. Often, punishments for conviction of criminal behavior is based on the seriousness and frequency of behavior (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). This study sought the recitation of the lived experiences of former criminal offenders who had served a sentence in a Federal correctional facility and their release and discharge thereafter, as a condition of participation. However, there was no condition placed on the type of crimes committed by the

participants, nor the 'level' of crime of criminal deemed so by law or other criteria other than its seriousness lead to incarceration. Therefore, there was no indication of what 'type' of criminal offender would agree to participate in the study.

It is thought by experts in the field of criminology or related fields, that while many of the attributes or characteristics of criminals who commit violent acts, crimes that are sexual in nature, gang related, impulse crimes, or crimes of passion, property crimes and 'white collar' crimes may be similar (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). However, it is also thought that many of the traits common to certain offenders differ greatly from those of other individuals who commit different type crimes (Chan & Shapiro, 2007). Therefore, it should be noted that because study participants here were all incarcerated due to non-violent 'white collar' crimes, or offenses related to the illegal distribution of narcotics, results from a different population of former offenders may be different. No offenders in this study were involved in violent crimes or sex offenses and none had been involved in gang or organized crime related offenses. There was no indication that any of the participants were suffering from any psychiatric disorders that may have led to the commission of criminal offenses. As such, the researcher would caution that results and conclusions found in this study may not generalize to other populations of criminal offenders with different characteristics and who were involved in different types of criminal offences.

Limitation 3. This phenomenological study sought to investigate the lived experiences of former criminal offenders. The study consisted of conducting interviews focusing on the criminal activity of the participants and their thinking patterns related to criminal behavior. As this study was limited to six participants, it is certainly possible that a study with more participants may have yielded different results.

Recommendations

The focus of this research was to gain better understanding of criminal thinking. Specifically, this study addressed the question: if criminal offenders are aware of their own patterns of thought leading to criminal behavior and if that awareness plays an influential role in the commission of crime. Based on the responses of the participants, the participants conveyed an awareness of their thought processes involved in their decisions to become involved in criminal behavior, and of the changing thought processes over an 'event line' of behavior. The research yielded an interesting insight into those thought processes and how the awareness of those patterns of thought affected the research participants.

The researcher suggests that more research is necessary to delve deeper into the influence of criminal thinking on criminal behavior. The results of this study suggest treatment programs should be offered to criminal offenders early in their criminal 'careers', before they reach the level of criminality that would trigger incarceration, or while they are incarcerated.

Based on the literature reviewed for this study, Neurolinguistic Programing (NLP) is a method of treatment used to alter aberrant or problem behavior. Neurolinguistic Programing, as detailed in Chapter 2 of this study, uses various techniques and methodologies based on the spoken language to explain and modify human behavior. In NLP, human behavior patterns are explained through the connection of neurological processes (neuro), language (linguistic) and experience (programming) (Bradley and Biedermann, 1985). A practitioner using NLP techniques will manipulate thought patterns in an attempt to modify behavior (Zaharia, Reiner and Schutz, 2015). Further research may focus of the use of NLP in assisting offenders in changing their criminal thinking.

A study could explore the effects of a prison-based treatment or training program, featuring methods and techniques developed using Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP) to determine if it can be used to address Criminal Thinking Styles (Errors), in a population of inmates. The researcher could test incarcerated criminal offenders for Criminal Thinking Errors using the PICTS also used in this study, in a pre-test post-test model. The test would be given to the inmates, after which they would participate in a class or program featuring the techniques of behavior modification used in the NLP model. After completing the class, they would be re-tested again using the PICTS assessment. This research would seek to answer the question of whether NLP can be effective in reducing Criminal Thinking Errors in criminal offenders, to then develop a prison-based program to eliminate criminal thought patterns and by extension criminal behavior, ultimately to reduce recidivism.

Treatment should be provided for lower level ‘early’ offenders who may have become involved with the criminal justice system, but have not committed crimes serious enough to warrant incarceration. Based on the current study, a program should be developed to address early criminal thinking tendencies, possibly including NLP techniques. Perhaps a diversion program, as a condition of probation, or as a condition of release.

Implications

It is certainly the goal of those conducting research to enhance the body of knowledge in their chosen field, or with the chosen subject of their research. This can be accomplished by beginning with a well thought out formulation for the premise for the study, followed by thorough preparation and implementation of the proper methodologies in data collection and analysis and in accurately drawing conclusions from the data that was uncovered. That was certainly the goal here. However, in order for this or any research to prove meaningful, the

results found and the recommendations made based on those results must be applied to populations where it would do the most good. In order for this or any research to provide some new knowledge, or reaffirm what is already known, and implementation of what has been found, there must be continued involvement of researchers in applying what was learned in real world situations.

As suggested in the first two chapters of this dissertation, the ultimate goal of this study is to provide evidence that may help to reduce criminal behavior. It is the role of social scientists, and others focused on pro-social matters to make the world a better place by engaging in endeavors that promote positive social change. Certainly, the formulation of theories and implementation of methods of reducing crime is a lofty goal, but one that must be undertaken by researchers and professionals in the fields associated with enforcement, incarceration and treatment of criminal offenders. Reducing crime through the modification of the thought processes in potential criminal offenders would certainly be a way to improve society to as a whole and those individuals touched by crime and criminality.

This research may very well have implications in the fields of psychology, criminal justice, criminology and other social sciences, if applied properly. The information developed here may prove valuable in the development of programs designed for the treatment of criminal offenders.

Conclusions

It is important to approach research without any preconceived notions of what the outcome of the research. In this case, it was important to consider whether the participants were aware of the thought patterns that were present that lead to criminal behavior. It was important to consider if or how the awareness of the criminal offenders own thought processes would influence their criminal behavior.

It appears evident that the research here was able to address both research questions regarding the individuals' awareness of the maladaptive thought processes present in criminal offenders and the influence the awareness of those thought processes had on behavior. Here, the six former offenders exhibited similar attitudes and feelings regarding their criminality along a similar 'event line'.

This 'event line' of thought and action was experienced by all participants regardless of the differences in individual characteristics unrelated to criminal behavior and of the differences in modes, methods, and duration of the commission of crime. The progression of feelings and attitudes of each study participant was similar, from beginning to end of the phenomenon studied for each participant. The perspectives, feelings and attitudes of each participant relative to each one's circumstances, were remarkably similar to those of the other participants.

At this stage of the research it is unknown if this phenomenon is a type of "shared social cognition" which some social psychologists have theorized takes place when different individuals are involved in similar circumstances (Resnick, 1991). That theory holds that when different individuals are exposed to a similar set of circumstances, that cognition of each individual will be similar to one another's (Resnick, 1991). The belief is that social aspects of a situation intrudes on what would be considered 'individual thought processes and cognition' (Resnick, 1991). Certainly, a study of the cognitive processes and patterns of thought involved in social interpretation of a situation involving the commission of criminal activity on a broader scale would yield interesting results.

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